world FILM news

ETTE DAVIS • WILLIAM SAROYAN • PAUL ROTHA • ROBT. FLAHERTY

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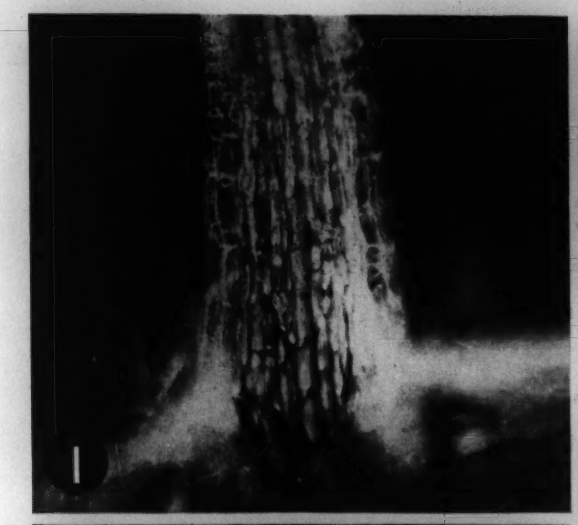

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- Roots
- Life Cycle
- How Plants Feed
- Self Defence
- Cabbage
- Thistle
- Seed Dispersal
- Pollination

2 ***Zoology***
- Amœba
- Paranecium
- Hydra
- Obelia
- Coelenterata
- Earthworm
- Annelida
- Tortoiseshell Butterfly
- Blowfly
- Heredity in Animals
- Heredity in Man

3 ***Embryology***
- Sea Urchin
- Frog
- Development of Chick

4 ***Ecology***
- Marine Sand Animals
- Animals of Rocky Shore
- Interdependence of Pond Life
- Moorlands
- Woodlands
- Downlands

5 ***Elementary Biology***
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WORLD FILM NEWS

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IN THIS ISSUE

Cover Still: Five Faces

Hollywood Is Where You Hang Your Head: by *William Saroyan* 52, 53, 73

Five Faces of Malaya 54, 55

North-West Frontier: by *Russell Ferguson* 56, 57

The Adventures of Marco Polo: by *Glen Norris* 58, 59

The Sound of History 60, 61, 62, 63

'Living Newspaper': by *Paul Rotha* 64, 65

When a Star Walks Out: by *Bette Davis* 66, 67

The Police Reporter Drinks: by *Clint Crews* 68, 69, 70, 71

Submarine D.1: by *Thomas Baird* 74, 75

British Exhibitors Mobilise Against Hollywood . . . 77, 78, 79, 80

Films Robert Flaherty Wants to See Again 81

Films Reviewed: by *John Grierson* and *Basil Wright* 82, 83

The Month's Releases 85

Review of Reviews: by *H. E. Blyth* 86, 87, 88, 89

Cockalorum: by *Rodney Hobson* 90, 91

Grown-Ups Prefer the Children's Hour: by *George Audit* . . . 93

Movies in Muswell Hill: *by Daphne Hudson* 95

Book Reviews 95, 96

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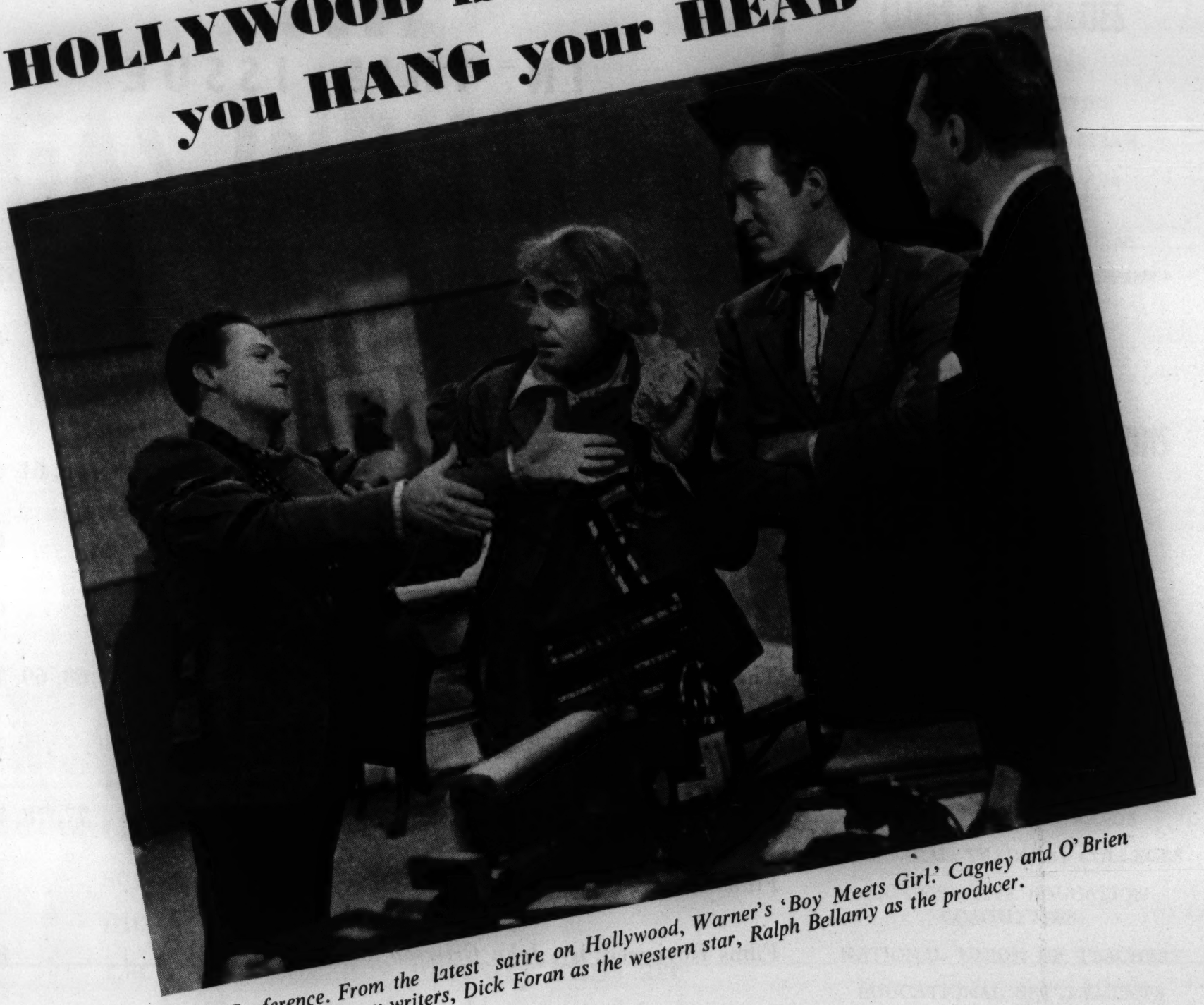
HOLLYWOOD is WHERE you HANG your HEAD



Story Conference. From the latest satire on Hollywood, Warner's 'Boy Meets Girl.' Cagney and O'Brien as the story writers, Dick Foran as the western star, Ralph Bellamy as the producer.

WHAT I'm talking about is *The American Writer and Hollywood.* By Hollywood I mean, naturally, the motion picture manufacturing industry. This industry has in a number of cases been generous to and kindly toward deserving American writers. It has enabled them to live, as it were, like kings. It has brought them from cold climates to a warm and pleasant climate, ideal for sleeping during the afternoon. It has lifted them from crowded slum streets populated by overworked and sickly human beings to clean, broad boulevards lousy with healthy, handsome, and under-worked human beings, generally in sports clothes. It has taught them how to dress, where to dine, what to drink, and how to do a small but pleasant variety of other things.

In return, however, the industry has not once, to my knowledge, received from any writer that force which has been the source of the writer's particular distinction. The industry, if it has gotten anything at all from the writer, has gotten something the writer discovered in Hollywood and is no good anywhere else. This thing may be politely called the ability to graciously wangle, bluff, and make friends.

For money, doing these things isn't worth the inner suffering that follows each day's performance.

If it were for comedy, one could tolerate one's self after the performance.

At best the writer wangles for something not worth getting; he bluffs about something he could never be serious about; and he makes friends with people he ordinarily would study carefully.

The fault is neither the industry's nor the writer's; the industry is in no need of literary genius, or expert talent. The industry does not photograph prose, it photographs people and places.

The most respected writers of Hollywood have not written and cannot write a decent story, essay, novel, or play. For the purposes of the industry, they don't need to be able to

Twenty-six year old William Saroyan has already achieved widespread recognition as one of America's most promising short story writers. His most recent successes include: *The Daring Young Man on the Flying Trapeze*, *Inhale and Exhale*, and *Little Children*.

Here he tells us just what success in Hollywood means to the young writer of to-day . . . 'Hollywood doesn't need writers as writers—they are idea men, story discussers, plotmen, dialogue writers. . . . Respected writers of Hollywood cannot write a decent story, essay, novel or play.'

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do so. Outside of Hollywood, the writer has a tradition to guide, motivate and inspire him. He can starve and yet be impelled to try to write greatly without feeling foolish. He knows it happened before. In Hollywood there is a tradition all right, but it isn't the sort that keeps a man in good inward health, as the tradition of literature does. If the writer is wise enough or foolish enough to accept the Hollywood tradition he will be sure to eat and lose his health.

This is no lamentation. There is no particular harm or good in eating or not eating, in losing or not losing something. Not in the abstract, I mean. It really doesn't matter. Some critics might view the situation with alarm, and fret over the consequences to native life, literature and culture, but for myself I would say that such general consequences to such general terms are not worth fretting about.

Although the motion picture industry has been kind to a number of first-rate American writers it has been *most* kind to second, third, fourth and fifth-rate writers who, in all honesty, have been more useful to the industry than first-rate ones.

The reason this is so is easy to discover.

The moving-picture art is still an art for an unconscious and dreaming people. The public, according to the executives of the industry, wants this, and does not want this. The people want escape, fantasy, and beautiful unreality. The box office proves they do. They want beautiful human beings in beautiful stories. Actually, however (and I think this can be proved scientifically), the public wants mostly the darkness and secrecy of the picture theatre and two hours of dreaming; after that, it wants no more than appears there. I think the public will gladly take anything Hollywood chooses to give it. I honestly believe the public would revolt if for some wild reason the picture theatres of America were shut down. What they want is the place; once they are there they will take anything good or bad.

The public accepts good and bad pictures with the same indifference. The public is not participating in the growth of a new art; it is healing itself, every other day, of ill-health, unhappiness, spiritual starvation, loneliness and boredom.

Consequently, bad writers are good writers in Hollywood—they know what their employers want and they know how to make it for them. There is nothing in this set-up for anybody to feel superior about. It is an orderly and sensible set-up. When a good writer has anything to do with it, you can be sure it is because he needs or wants some money for a change. That's all.

When I first went to work in Hollywood I hoped to do the sort of writing I believed to be worth doing. I had a job. I was earning a good salary. I was eager about the possibilities of the form, and I was grateful to my employers. I worked hard. In addition to the work I was assigned to do, which was ordinary, I worked evenings and Sundays. I wrote an original picture story entitled: "The Travellers". My employer allowed me to read the story to him. He listened attentively, was impressed, but told me he wouldn't think of making a picture of the story. I was not trying to *sell* him the story. It was his. I had done it, supposedly, on his time. This story was what is known as a tragedy. At any rate the male and the female died.

My employer told me he understood what I was trying to do; he agreed that the story was not only good but would be easy and inexpensive to produce, but that it was certain to be a flop.

"Your story," he said, "is about several people the way they are. The public doesn't want that. They want to see themselves the way they aren't."

I was given new assignments. They weren't especially pleasing ones, but it was good discipline doing them. I asked if I might write an original story and was given permission to do so on company time. I wrote a sort of novelette about a football player who refused to stop being a hero after graduating from college.

The studio liked it and assigned to me to do the same sort of thing on a story that was not my own. I mean, I was asked to write another novelette. I didn't like the story and tried to get out of the assignment. I loafed on the job six days and was fired. This was proper. I didn't like the story. A good hack would have been able to do something with the story maybe, and maybe not. At any rate, I couldn't do anything with it. It bored me.

At this point, I believe, the matter was settled. I mean, about getting by in Hollywood. If I had cared to do that job, I daresay I would have become a prosperous member of the writing colony of Hollywood. Nevertheless, I was very happy when they fired me.

My next employer asked me to read three stories by Clarence Budington Kelland which had appeared in the *Saturday Evening Post*. The stories were about a young lawyer who leaves New York and goes to a small average American town to shape a political career for himself, and does so. I spent about six weeks reading the stories and writing what is known as a treatment of them. My treatment pleased my employers and all seemed well, so I quit the job and returned to San Francisco.

I had proved to myself that I could, if I liked, be a success as a Hollywood writer. Anybody who can fool with three stories by Clarence Budington Kelland for six weeks is a natural-born cinch in Hollywood.

The question however is: What if you are a success in Hollywood? Suppose you are? So what?

Well, you wear tailor-made suits, expensive shirts, shoes, ties, socks, etc. You eat the best food. You live in swanky apartments. You drink the best liquor money can buy. You meet wealthy people and famous ones. You meet a very beautiful and famous actress, for instance, and discover she has the intelligence of a girl of eight. At the same time she is a brilliant conversationalist. You converse. Nothing happens to her intelligence. It is eight on on any subject. What she has, however, is something a lot more exciting than intelligence. I don't mean sex. I mean beauty and drive. She has an endless amount of each. The situation is awful and glorious. You meet also numerous producers; they are all human. You go to The Clover Club and gamble. You

(*Continued on page* 73)

FIVE FACES

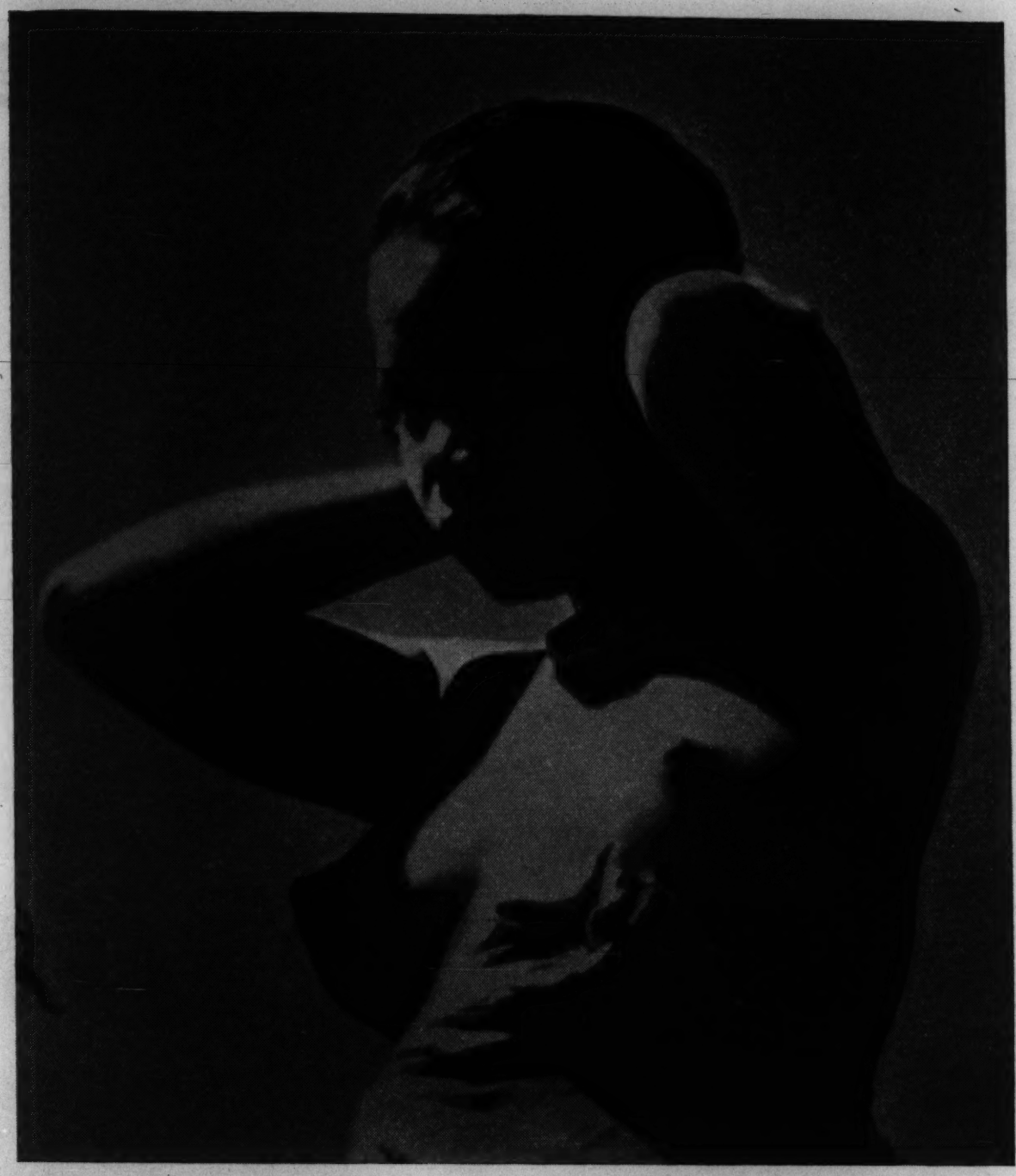
An exclusive note on the making of Strand's new film, together with some observations on the races, customs and love life of the Malayans, by a doctor who spent many years among them.

FIVE Faces of Malaya, Alexander Shaw's 3,000 footer of Malaya, is soon to be released. I say to Shaw "What shall I say about it?" He says "You might point out that travelogue makers say that it is impossible to give a good impression of a country when you are moving quickly through it. I was alone there for three weeks, and although it was pretty hard going, I shot eight thousand feet."

After Shaw, I went to a doctor from Malaya and asked him about the people, and if you remember the following description of his when you see the film you will realise that for a three-week impression *Five Faces* is pretty hot.

"Probably about one in a hundred Europeans have ever seen a Sakai or Samang (the first face of Malaya). They are very scarce and very shy. If one saw a European on a path far up country he would dodge into the jungle as fast as 'scat'. It is true that of recent years a few civil servants have made contact with them but so far as I know they have successfully avoided us. One tin prospector did, in early days, succeed in enticing a female Sakai to his bedroom but when he came to he had a bump on his head as big as a coconut and that is the nearest a European ever got, I imagine.

"Shaw says at this point: 'Recently a great deal of anthropological work has been done



among the Sakai by H. D. Noone, and some are accessible now, if you don't mind riding on an elephant.'

"The Chinese (the second face) have been coming to Malaya for centuries looking for trade and tin. They got both. They own nearly all the towns of Malaya, more than half the tin fields, a good deal of the rubber lands, and do nearly all the shopkeeping. The Chinaman just works and works and works. He is the busy bee, the ant, the go-getter, the Jew, the Jap or what you will, of Malaya. If he is unlucky he dies pulling his barrow along Weld Quay or falls down dead between the shafts of his rickshaw after pulling it for fifteen years. If he is lucky he will finish up a millionaire towkay, with a fine fat belly and a red, round face. He will have achieved the glazed, bland, philosophical look that brandy buys. He will have taken several later wives and have a host of children, but his first wife will roar and raise hell in the kitchen to the end.

"Brandy and Guinness are the popular aphrodisiacs. For the wealthy towkay, rhinoceros horn or tiger's testicle are more potent delights. The Chinese work hard at everything.

"The Europeans (the third face) are the rarest face in Malaya, but it is possible to live in Singapore for years and see little else. Empire builders and pioneers do not live here any more.

"Someone has called Malaya a middle class paradise and that is just about it. Bankers, brokers, shippers, traders (wholesale, of course, so as to keep their social standing), doctors, dentists, divines—just that kind. There are lots of big executives, but they all have to bow mighty low when they go back to the office to explain to London why the profits are down. They leave no mark on the country except Golf Courses, Race Tracks and big Hotels—just like London—and all waiting for the day to retire with £600 a year to Tonbridge, Bexhill, Bognor.

"From the days of Stamford Raffles the country has had a series of grand Colonial Governors. The civil service is superb.

"The Tamil (the fourth face) was born to do Malaya donkey work. Every job that is dirty, undesirable and monotonous is the Tamil's. From the time he lands in Malaya he finds that the lot for which God created him is incessant work, and the very occasional wherewithal to get drunk. Doubtless Malaya objects that God might have created a better worker, for the lean gangling Tamil, with his big awkward feet can and does break in record time any machine or tool ever invented, create chaos that will take a European days to repair. In spite of Shaw the Tamil is also the world's noisiest worker—his is the only noisy face in Malaya—and he adds to the pandemonium of the day by his incessant brawling and wife beating to make the night hideous.

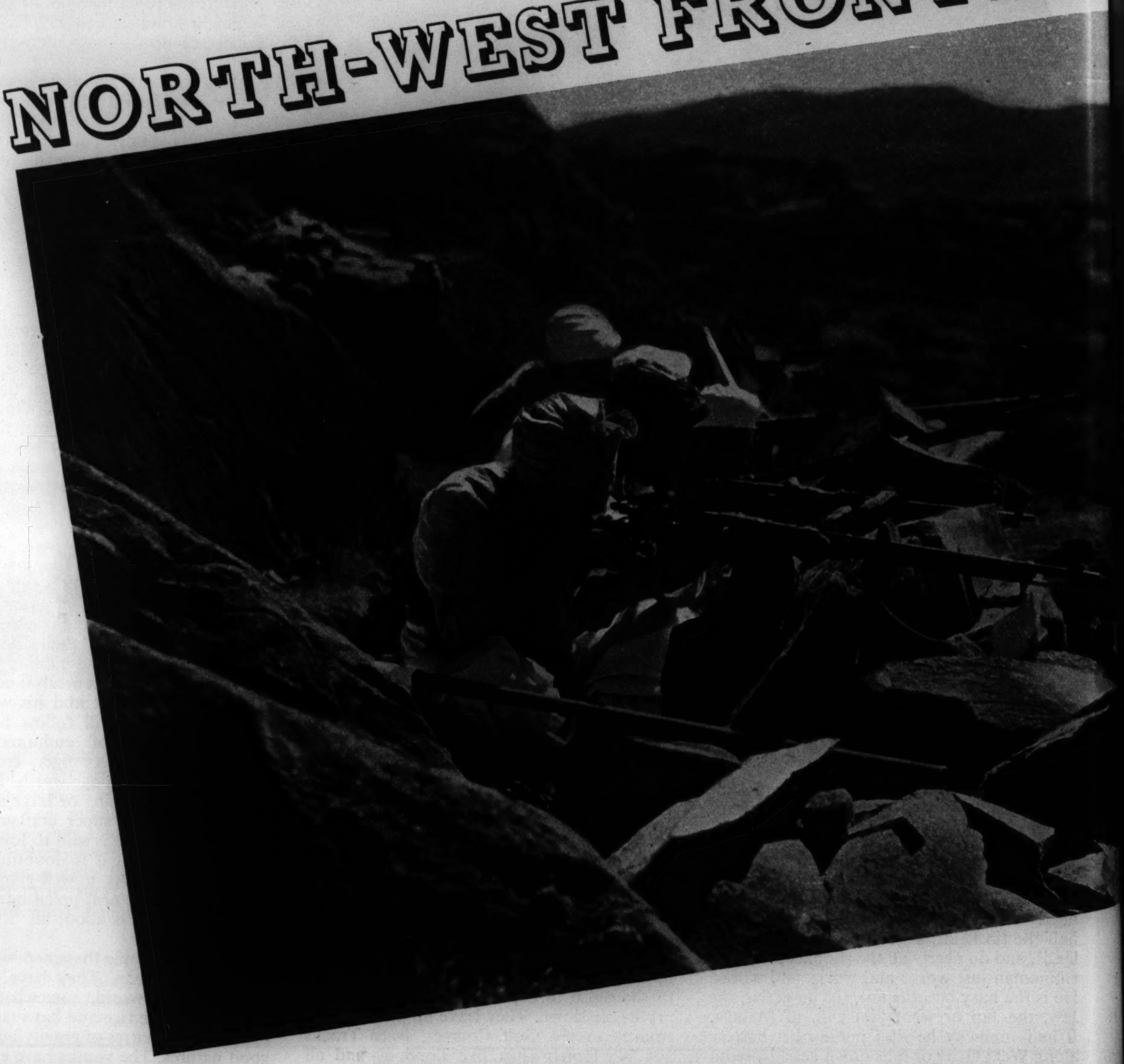
"Still the old Tamil does not do too badly, for he goes back to Malaya for subsequent spells and often settles down altogether. On all wealthy estates paternalism is practised, and it pays to cure his malaria-sodden body and care for his diet for he fills out well and breeds mightily, which is more than he can do in his native India. So Malaya gets more and better Tamils—and needs them—for Malaya can use plenty donkeys.

"THE Malayans (the fifth face) number less than half the faces in Malaya. It might be said that they are dispossessed tenants, but things have worked out pretty well for them. Successive Colonial Governors have been so charmed with this race that they have seen to it that the Malay has had a square deal. Certainly he is the most independent, most untouched and least drawn into our own economic snare of all our 'subject peoples'.

"They have been dispossessed in one sense; their major export trade was continuous and successful piracy till a century ago. The staple home industry was family feud and inter-state war, and in quieter times the brighter spirits amused their days with knifing Chinese travellers and raiding Chinese villages. But these colourful times are gone. The Malay toils not and his wife does the spinning, but he will follow for days and perform heroics of endurance and abstinence in pursuit of tiger, crocodile, wild elephant or anything worth hunting. He has no use for mining or large scale agriculture, but he is a super craftsman of gold, silver or wood. He is said to love ceremonial and uniforms, but it is doubtful if he takes them seriously. As a well-graced actor he takes pride in the neat precision of his movements—but that is about all.

"Beautiful people these and worth a whole film to themselves. They have the loveliest babies in the world, somewhat pot-bellied from premature rice and bananas which may disturb their centres of gravity but never their good natures. The youths have every athletic grace without the athletic vice of over strenuousness, the men bestride their world with dignity and poise, proud and of a masterly courtesy. The aged chatter away their days in exchange of rhymed proverbs or tasting for the hundredth time the epic stories of old wars and the high days of piracy. No sensible Malay will ever go to bed as long as a few friends remain to yarn or the fiddler keeps on playing. The next day doesn't matter much. Let the other chap worry about new roads, new railways, telephones and sewers—it will probably improve the Malay's lot but the other chap seems to like it. Amused and tolerant and non-co-operating. The Malay's only clock is the sun and he is generally late on that."

NORTH-WEST FRONTIER



MUCH the most interesting thing about the North-West Frontier of India is the persistence of the traditions of the Pathans on the one hand and of the British administration on the other. A study of the relevant literature, drama and film reveals that in all their dealings with each other, the natives and the British punctiliously observe a pattern of behaviour which practically never varies in detail, and certainly never in essentials. Korda's new film, *The Drum*, is a valuable document, in that it sets out authoritatively all the principles involved.

Since the Pathans are a warlike people who live, so to speak, by killing each other, and the British are there to keep them in order, most of the business transacted—in fact all of it—is in the form of revolts, and since each side always behaves in the same way, all the revolts are exactly the same.

The opening gambit always rests with the native side. There are no instances of British troops starting a native revolt. The practice is for one chief to murder another, usurp his throne and prepare to start a revolution "along the entire frontier." All these affairs take place "along the entire frontier." The main tradition of the actual murder is that the usurper invariably allows someone to escape from the victim's household, in order to bring word to the British. This lets the British troops know that they have an away fixture.

The formality is always observed, but always unnecessary, for the Governor at Peshawar invariably knows all about the impending revolt beforehand. The reason for this is, that all British officers above the rank of a second lieutenant dress up, as part of their regular duty, in native clothes, dye their beards, and fetch information about machine-gun emplacements and revolts "along the entire frontier." But now we come to one of the

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Russell Ferguson

not only beats 'The Drum'—he kicks a hole right through the middle.

★ ★

strongest of the British traditions, which is, to rely on character. The reply to the native threat always takes the form of a ball at the Residency at Peshawar.

This ball at the Residency, it may be noted in a historical aside, is in very old tradition. It is probably directly descended from the game of bowls on Plymouth Hoe, and has come down the centuries, via the dance before Waterloo (there was a sound of revelry by night) and the ball before Balaclava in *The Charge of the Light Brigade*. Anyway, whatever the historical origin, it is now an essential part of the social life of the military stationed in the East. Native unrest—ball, native unrest—ball, one follows the other in inexorable rhythm.

The function has, however, a further traditional purpose, for it is at this ball that the Governor's daughter gets engaged. In view of the native unrest, it is clear that someone will soon be required to be the only white woman in the hills, so the Governor makes haste to get his daughter married to a suitable officer, whom he will shortly put in charge of the revolt. The officer's name need not, of course, be Carruthers, but so many men of that name have put down revolts that if there is a Carruthers about he is the automatic choice.

The formula of betrothal varies but little. He says, "Could you give your life to the frontier—with me thrown in?" and she replies, "No, darling, but I could give my life to you, with the frontier thrown in."

By and by the bridegroom is taken aside, appointed to a new Residency established at the danger spot in the hills. This is not done in any precipitate manner, but after an adequate lapse of time, in order to ensure that the trouble will develop reasonably, so that when the troops go up they will be surrounded. What is the use of British troops unless they are surrounded? Everybody knows that they are not at their best unless they are hopelessly outnumbered.

Anyway, the practice is for the Governor to take the young man aside and say, "I want you to go up there and keep your eye on things." This, being translated, means "I want you to go up there and get surrounded."

So a small garrison of British troops moves into the Pathan city and awaits the next development. It is against the rules for the Pathans to murder the British at this stage. It has never happened—if it did, it would be much the same as shooting the fox on sight. On practical grounds, as well as in principle, it is impossible, for the preceding ritual takes several days, and no detail of it can be omitted. So the feast is fixed for several days ahead (massacres always take place at a feast).

Meantime the Pathan chief has several things to do. A lot of spying and counter-spying is involved. Both sides know all that is necessary to proceed, because the chief himself on his side spends most of his time giving broad hints of his intentions, while the British command is trying all the time to send the only white woman back to Peshawar. The spying continues, however, for the look of the thing. In passing, we may note that the spying could scarcely be dispensed with, in any case, because according to long established usage somebody has to be thrown into a dungeon with his tongue cut out.

In several interviews the Pathan chief kisses the white woman's hand and calls her the most beautiful rose in the gardens of the East.

When these and other preliminaries have taken place, it is time for feast, massacre and rescue. It is not unusual for the rescue to prevent the massacre, but if it does not, the main tradition to be observed is that no officers are to be killed, only common soldiers. Generally, determined attempts are made to kill the British commanding officer (in Korda's specimen, a machine gun trained upon him is fired continuously for several minutes) but never with serious consequences.

At the end, the Pathan chief is killed, preferably by the man who had his tongue cut out, and peace reigns once more. Another page of British history has been written.

All this, set out in Technicolour, makes a magnificent record of life in North-West India, the same yesterday, to-day, and to-morrow. There are those who say that our old traditions are decaying—so they may be elsewhere, but not on the Frontier.

Mr. A. E. W. Mason, in introducing Sabu and Desmond Tester at the première of the film, said, "We had no idea of propaganda, but we hope you will see, in the friendship we have tried to portray between these young people, a symbol of the friendship which is so common between British people and the Pathans of North-West India."

This was well said, for these people, though treacherous, are very loyal, and we must always remember that although at regular intervals we have to go up among them with machine guns and artillery and knock hell out of them, they are our friends.

No officers are to be killed . . ." (*The Drum—London Films*)

THE ADVENTURES of MARCO POLO

Curiosity or cupidity, or both, made Marco Polo one of the world's greatest travellers. His exploits are the subject of a new United Artists film featuring Gary Cooper. GLEN NORRIS tells us something of the real Marco Polo.

Pilg rim—at the Western gate of Pekin: "It is a procession that never ends—the e aring of tribute to our Emperor Kublaï Khan. From the warm south come silks, spices, gold and jade; from the cold north come the skins of sables and ermine; from India, precious stones—all the treasures of the world for him who is great enough to command it."

WE jump back 750 years. In Europe it is the day of petty strong men, fighting about religion. The Crusades are flooding Greece, Turkey and Palestine in blood. Europe is so busy making war, it hasn't yet started learning to live. A few men have discovered that making money is more fun than killing. Of the traders, Venice is the Capital, the Venetians the leaders. As fast as the Crusaders conquer, the ships of Venice follow, to annex the trade, exploit the wealth of the land.

But in the East it is the day of the dictator. In the sun-parched desert of Mongolia, there is a thirteen-year-old boy who is destined to rise suddenly to prominence in world affairs; and achieve such a series of conquests as has no parallel in history.

The Mongols are tribes of wandering horsemen. They live in tents of felt, eat meat and drink mare's milk. The Chief of the leading tribe has just died, to be succeeded by his thirteen year old son, Jengiz Khan. The boy is a born fighter—he is also a propagandist. He preaches the doctrine of "One Race, One Nation". In turn he brings tribe after tribe under his banner. Then he looks towards North China, stages a dramatic "March on Pekin", captures the city, proclaims himself Emperor of the Mongols and Tartars.

Jengiz Khan then builds up the greatest war machine the world has ever seen: an army far ahead of anything in Europe. He uses the Chinese invention of gunpowder in small field guns. He has a system of spies working ahead of his army. He trains homing eagles to carry his messages. All these devices are unknown in the West. The best European generals are tyros of strategy compared to the Mongols. With this gigantic war machine Jengiz Khan begins an amazing march of conquest: Turkestan, Persia, Armenia, India down to Lahore, South Russia, west to Bulgaria, Hungary and Eastern Germany. At the pinnacle of their power, the Mongols exult: "In the strength of God we will overwhelm the whole Earth! If God were not with us, how could we be so strong?" Only the death of Jengiz Khan, and his son, Oktaï Khan, saves all Europe from certain invasion. Had it not been so, the whole history of the West might have been different.

The full flower of the Mongol Empire comes in the reign of Jengiz Khan's grandson, Kublaï Khan. Less of a fighter, he changes the rule of the dictator to the rule of learning and culture. While Europe is just yawning awake from a long, barbaric sleep, Kublaï Khan makes Pekin the most civilised city in the world.

An unbelievable splendour at court—a polish and courtesy that comes West only centuries later—tolerance: Jews and Christians have complete religious freedom. Marvels of engineering: the Great Wall of China—the Grand Canal from Pekin to Canton, still to-day the longest man-made waterway. In the arts, China is already mature: painting, engraving, bronze casting, sculpture and architecture. The invention of paper is already more than a thousand years old—wood blocks have been used for printing for three hundred years—printed books are in

circulation on every conceivable subject—internal trade is financed with *paper money*. Time is measured by water clocks—the stars are watched through telescopes—coal is mined—salt is extracted from brine. It is a world of wonders, and into it, wide-eyed, steps Marco Polo.

THERE are three Polos: Nicolo and Maffeo are brothers, Marco is Nicolo's son. They are Venetian merchants. They face ever fiercer competition for the home trade of the Mediterranean. When young Marco is six, Nicolo and Maffeo decide they must outdo their rivals by pushing further east. Leaving Marco at home, they travel to Constantinople, on through the Crimea, north along the Volga, east to Bokhara. Here they meet an ambassador from the court of Kublaï Khan. The ambassador persuades them to go with him on the gigantic journey across Asia. Kublaï Khan receives them with great honour. Their trade with the Mongol merchants brings them huge profits. When they head for home again, Kublaï Khan appoints them his personal ambassadors to carry greetings to the Pope, makes them promise to return. They reach Venice after nine years absence. Nicolo's wife is dead—Marco is fifteen.

Two years later, they set out to keep their promise, take Marco with them. Three men against the fury of nature, forcing their way across the wild vastness of Asia. After three years of hardship and hunger, at last they bow low before Kublaï Khan. They bring a letter from the Pope, sacred oil from the Holy Land, and Marco. He is 21—the Emperor is 59. Between these two, there grows one of the strangest friendships in history.

Marco learns the languages and customs of the Mongol Empire. Kublaï Khan finds him tactful and intelligent, soon gives the boy important political work, makes him a member of the Imperial Council, sends him on missions to all parts of the Empire. Marco discovers that Kublaï Khan has an insatiable appetite for details of the life of his subjects. So the young Venetian keeps a notebook of strange facts, to be related to the Emperor. Marco holds one important post after another. During one of the local wars, the Polos help design a catapult to hurl 300 lb. stones at the enemy.

All three Polos remain at the court of Kublaï Khan for seventeen years. Now that the Emperor is nearing death, they fear that his passing may put them into the hands of their enemies. They ask to be allowed to return home. Kublaï Khan is so attached to them, he refuses to let them go. At last their chance comes. Kublaï Khan's daughter, the Princess Kukachin, has been betrothed to the Khan of Persia. She must sail to the land of her future husband. The Polos are expert navigators—they beg to be allowed to pilot her ship. Reluctantly, Kublaï Khan agrees. It takes them two years to reach Persia. Princess Kukachin finds that her future husband is already dead—she marries his son. A year later the Polos are back in Venice. Waiting for them, is the news that Kublaï Khan is

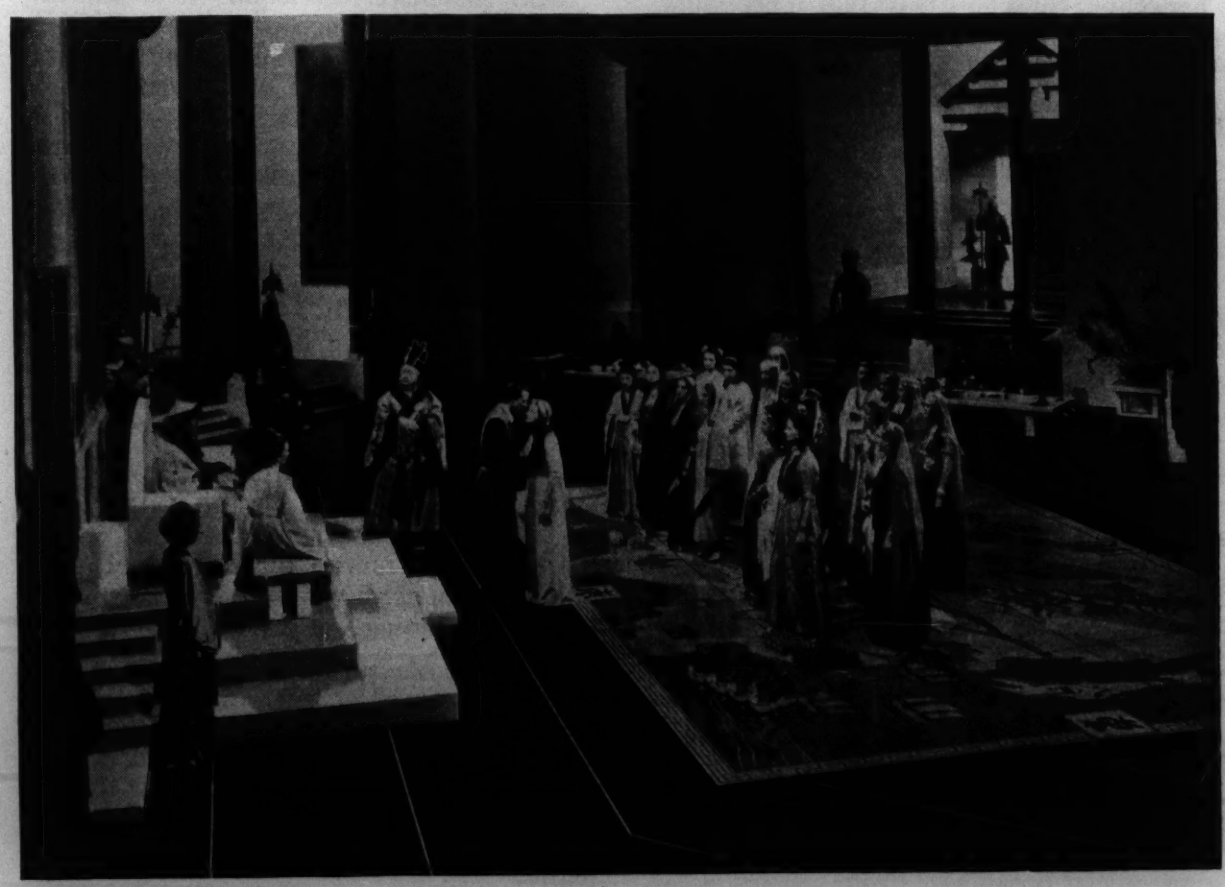
dead, his Empire already beginning to crumble.

Three years later. Marco has become involved in a local feud between Venice and Genoa. He has been taken prisoner in a battle between rival ships, is in a Genoese prison. During the years that pass before his release, he dictates the story of his travels. He paints so vast a canvas, that for hundreds of years men call him a liar. Only within the last century have explorers finally proved the uncanny accuracy of his observation. His is one of the world's greatest stories. Now into it steps a modern adventurer, cinema producer Sam Goldwyn, to bring the story to life on the screen.

IN Hollywood, history is a good servant but a bad master. Screen-Marco, Gary Cooper re-lives the adventures against the authentic background, but sometimes he moves some way off the path of his namesake. The film sends him alone on his journey, while Nicolo and Maffeo "mind the shop" at home. In the Mongol Empire his "adventures" include the discovery of spaghetti, gunpowder, and coal (all authentic). He finds an easy-going almost childishly simple Kublaï Khan, practically ruled by a sinister Ahmed. In the course of unmasking the villainous Ahmed, Marco falls in love with Princess Kukachin, helps Kublaï Khan pick girls for the harem, plays the leading part in quelling a Tartar rising, saves the Emperor from losing his throne, and as a magnificent climax, leads the storming of Pekin to rescue the Princess from Ahmed's clutches.

But the neatest trick of the film is in the last scene. Marco is to escort Princess Kukachin to Persia—she asks how long it will take to get there: he replies, "Oh! Years . . . and years . . . and years"—they kiss—the music swells to the fade-out.

In the true story, when the journey to Persia started, Marco was over forty, the Princess seventeen; and their relationship was that of father and daughter. When Marco found that the man to whom the Princess was betrothed was dead, she was at once palmed off on the son. But perhaps the sight of a film heroine treating Gary Cooper like a father would be more than the cinema could bear!



MARCO (Gary Cooper)—to candidate for Harem duty: "How many teeth has a snapping turtle?"
KUBLAI KHAN (George Barbier)—from the throne: "Group two dismissed!"
PRINCESS KUKACHIN (Sigrid Gurie)—sitting below Kublaï: "Take this Venetian and let him see how you dispose of them."

THE SOUND OF HISTORY . .

THE FIRST DAY
FRIDAY, MARCH 11

7.56 a.m. AUSTRIAN KETTLE BOILS

CBS Announcer: "Austria—The Austrian tea kettle is likely to boil over any minute. . . . Chancellor Schuschnigg says that, if necessary, he will proclaim martial law on Sunday when Austria's seven and a half million citizens vote in the national independence referendum. Meanwhile Nazi anger over the election is growing more intense and anything is liable to happen. . . . The Austrian-German frontier at Salzburg was mysteriously closed for an hour this morning. No explanation was given. . . . And here's a bulletin that's just come in from Vienna. Chancellor Schuschnigg has sent out a call for army reserve men to aid in preserving order over the weekend".

9.25 a.m. NAZIS BATTLE POLICE

CBS Announcer: "Innsbrück—Angry Nazis are battling with the police in the streets of Innsbruck. The officers are said to be using bayoneted rifles and sabres to subdue the Nazis, who are estimated to number as many as fifteen thousand. The police are reported to have only a few hundred men".

12.29 p.m. REFERENDUM DOOMED

CBS Announcer: "Vienna—The general election on Austrian independence has been postponed. This has just been announced in an official broadcast. From other sources it is reported that the popular referendum set for Sunday is not only to be postponed, but cancelled by decision of the Cabinet which is meeting right now over the tense situation. . . . The action was taken under the extreme pressure of Germany, which is reported to have given Schuschnigg a virtual ultimatum while it concentrated German troops on the Austrian border".

2.15 p.m. SCHUSCHNIGG RESIGNS

CBS Announcer: "Vienna—It is officially announced that Chancellor Kurt Schuschnigg has resigned. The announcement has just been broadcast by the official government radio station".

2.45 p.m. TROOPS CROSS BORDER

CBS Announcer: "This is a bulletin which the Associated Press has just received from Vienna. The Austrian Government press bureau announces that German troops have crossed the Austrian border at the town of Tassau".

3.43 p.m. SWASTIKA OVER VIENNA

CBS Announcer: "Vienna—The swastika flag is now flying from the top of the Chancellory building, which is the seat of the Austrian Government. But so far there is no official announcement as to what is going on inside the building. . . ."

6 p.m. SCHUSCHNIGG'S FAREWELL

CBS Announcer: "Austria is in the hands of the Nazis and all Europe is in a turmoil. In a farewell radio address Schuschnigg told the people that he had been compelled to back down under threats of violence from Germany".

7.30 p.m. FRENCH-BRITISH PROTEST

CBS Announcer: "Paris—The French government has just joined with the British in protesting to Adolf Hitler for the use of coercion in Austria. The note warns that the action Germany is taking 'must entail grave repercussions, the consequences of which cannot be foreseen' ".

11.15 p.m. CHRONICLERS OF FACT

James Austin: "What seemed destined to be a day in which domestic news would prevail over foreign news, developed, hour by hour, into a chronicle of European upheaval. . . . What will be the result of this tense situation, we cannot say; we are reporters of occurrences; chroniclers of fact." (*Mr. Austin then proceeded to recount and summarize for the CBS audience, the vivid 'newsbreaks' of the day*).

12 Midnight. SPECIAL CBS NEWS FLASH

CBS Announcer: "Vienna—The Nazis are now holding jubilation meetings throughout the country and the swastika flag of Germany is flying from all public buildings".

Six Days that shook the world in March 1938. The Central Scene is Vienna, the chief actor Adolf Hitler and the historians are the Radio Reporters of the Columbia Broadcasting System of America.

Hour by hour the crisis was reported from the main European centres. We give here only short extracts but, we hope, enough to provide a basis for comparison with the news services of our own B.B.C. Here is an international event, history on the march, reported in a dramatic, realistic fashion that should stir our radio newsmen into a critical examination of their present methods.

THE SECOND DAY

SATURDAY, MARCH 12

7.55 a.m. HITLER NEARS AUSTRIA

CBS Announcer: "Adolf Hitler, former Austrian house painter, is returning to his homeland as a conqueror. He already is somewhere close to the Austrian border".

9.55 a.m. "I SHALL BE HAPPY"

CBS Announcer: "German troops are marching over all the frontiers of Austria. . . . Chancellor Hitler, himself, took off from Berlin in a plane. Just before he left, Hitler announced a proclamation to the world. 'I, as Fuehrer—Chancellor of Germany—shall be happy to enter Austria as a German and a free citizen of a country which is also my homeland . . . ' One hundred German transport planes took off and flew over the Austrian border. It is understood that the planes carried troops to Vienna".

12.45 p.m. ENTRY INTO AUSTRIA

CBS Announcer: "Chancellor Adolf Hitler has made a triumphant entry into Austria, the land of his birth, and is ~~being~~ wildly acclaimed by the people. . . . A great torchlight procession is being prepared in his honour in the Austrian capital and all Nazi organisations have been summoned by radio to take part in the reception".

3 p.m. "DEUTSCHLAND, SIEG HEIL!"

CBS Announcer: "Linz, Austria—Chancellor Adolf Hitler has just finished an eloquent address to the people of Austria. . . . Hitler declared that he has at last won the goal for which he had fought and struggled for many years, namely to unite his homeland of Austria with Germany, the Motherland. Hitler concluded the speech by shouting, 'Deutschland, Sieg Heil' ".

5.47 p.m. FRENCH GUARD BORDER

CBS Announcer: "Paris—The French troops along the German border have been ordered to remain at their posts without leave until further notice. . . ."

6.25 p.m. EIGHTY MILES FROM VIENNA

CBS Announcer: "Hitler started by motor for Vienna, the capital, for his crowning triumph. He is expected to stay to-night in the town of Amstetten, eighty miles from Vienna, and enter the capital to-morrow with all the pomp, ceremony and fanfare of a conquering hero".

6.30 p.m. EYE-WITNESS REPORT

CBS Announcer: "We take you now to London, England".

William L. Shirer: "Hello, America! . . . When I returned to Vienna yesterday morning from Yugoslavia, I found tension. . . . As I made my way from the station to my home, I found the Vienna streets littered with millions of electioneering leaflets, calling on the populace to vote for Schuschnigg and Austrian independence. . . . I went into the Swansenburg Café and encountered some Austrian newspapermen who reported that the Nazis had just broken the windows of the Monarchist's offices and that the Monarchists were a bit frightened. But no one in the café seemed unduly nervous. We had the impression, I must admit, that the plebiscite would go out peacefully. We heard the radio announce a call-out of the whole class of army reserves to keep order. We know now that that was Dr. Schuschnigg's first answer to Hitler's ultimatum, but at that time we thought it would help insure peaceful election. . . .

"I'm here to-night to report what I saw, not to give my personal opinions. I saw no disorders in Vienna provoked by the workers. But when I arrived in Berlin this noon I found that the newspapers were appearing in flaming headlines about violent Red disorders, as they put it, in Vienna. And I have here before me the front page of Chancellor Hitler's own newspaper, the focus of attention this morning. Its banner headline reads: 'GERMAN-AUSTRIA SAVED FROM CHAOS' . . . People here to-night keep asking me who were the Nazis from Berlin who superintended last night's remarkable turn of events. Well, there were conflicting reports in both Vienna and Berlin, but early this morning we were officially informed in Vienna that Rudolph Hess, Hitler's deputy and right-hand man, had arrived during the evening and gone straight to the Chancellory. I believe it was about midnight when I went hot-footing it, with about one hundred thousand others, to the place, where, rumour has it, Hess would speak. But he failed to show up. Another man sent from Vienna was Joseph Buerckel whom I had met during the Saar plebiscite just a few years ago and who did such an efficient job there. . . .

6.33 p.m.

"Austria's resistance to Nazi Socialism actually collapsed at 6.15 p.m. yesterday, when it was announced on the radio that the plebiscite had been indefinitely postponed. . . . When the radio announcement came over the loudspeaker, the Fatherland Front people and the workers melted away and stole home as best they could. On the other hand, it was the signal for the Nazis to come out and capture the streets of the capital. And yet, as late as 6 p.m., the picture had been quite different. I was walking across a large square just a block from the Opera, at six, just as two lone policemen were driving a crowd of 500 Nazis off the square without the slightest difficulty. A half hour later you would not have recognised Vienna as being the same city.

6.34 p.m.

"With the announcement that the plebiscite was off, the Nazis suddenly poured by tens of thousands into the old inner city. . . . I saw a strange sight: twenty men, bent down, formed a human pyramid, and a little man—I suppose he was picked for his weight—scampered over a lot of shoulders and, clutching a huge swastika flag, climbed to the balcony of the Chancellory. It was on this balcony less than four years ago that Major Fey, held prisoner by the Nazis after Dollfuss was shot, parleyed with Dr. Schuschnigg's Provincial Government. . . .

"By 2 a.m. there were few policemen to be seen in the streets. Instead, the Nazis in civilian clothes and with fixed bayonets were keeping order. By 3 a.m. the streets were fairly quiet. I decided before calling it a night to go over to the central telegraph office where many of the newspaper correspondents file their stories. . . . Inside I found the Nazis had taken complete charge."

London Announcer: "We now return you to America".

THE THIRD DAY

SUNDAY, MARCH 13

7 a.m. ULTIMATUM TO GREAT BRITAIN

CBS Announcer: "London—It has just been learned on high authority that Czechoslovakia has sent an ultimatum to Great Britain on the Austrian crisis. . . . It asserted

that unless Britain is ready to take concrete action on the present crisis, Czechoslovakia will be forced to reconsider its entire foreign policy. . . ".

8.15 a.m. WAR PLANES OVER CZECHS

CBS Announcer: "Berlin—It became known this morning that a number of German war planes had flown over Czechoslovakian territory. The Czech government announced that Germany has promised a full investigation of the incident".

8.45 a.m. HITLER AT LEONDING

CBS Announcer: "Vienna—This morning Hitler visited the graves of his parents at Leonding. . . ".

11.29 a.m. "NO AFFAIR OF OUTSIDE WORLD"

CBS Announcer: "Berlin—Field-Marshal Hermann Goering, Hitler's right-hand man, has declared that the Austro-German relations are no affair of the outside world . . .".

3 p.m. MIKLAS RESIGNS

CBS Announcer: "Vienna—A new general election to indicate Austrian approval or disapproval of the new union between Germany and Austria has just been announced for April 10th. The announcement came immediately on the heels of the resignation of President Wilhelm Miklas, who left office under Nazi pressure".

8.26 p.m. VIENNA

Edward Murrow: "This is Edward Murrow speaking from Vienna. It's now nearly 2.30 in the morning and Herr Hitler has not yet arrived. No one seems to know just when he will get here, but most people expect him sometime after ten to-morrow morning.

"I arrived here by air from Warsaw and Berlin only a few hours ago. I'd like to tell you a few things seen and heard in the course of the day. From the air Vienna didn't look much different, but nevertheless it's changed. The crowds are courteous as they've always been, but many people are in a holiday mood. They lift the right arm a little higher here than in Berlin, and 'Heil, Hitler' is said a little more loudly. . . . Nearly every principal building has its armed guard, including the one from which I'm speaking. . . .

"We're planning to bring you an eye-witness account of Herr Hitler's entry into Vienna sometime to-morrow and we return you now to America".

Bob Trout: "And now in our studios in Washington, D.C., we're to hear from the Honourable Lewis B. Schwellenbach, Democratic Senator from the State of Washington. We take you now to Washington, D.C."

8.31 p.m. WASHINGTON

Senator Schwellenbach: "Never in the world's history has it been more necessary for democracy to work than it is for democracy to work here now. . . . The permanent advance of civilisation depends upon the successful maintenance of democratic institutions somewhere. That place should be here. Let us turn our hands to that task. Let no outside influences turn us from it".

THE FOURTH DAY

MONDAY, MARCH 14

5.59 a.m. 10,000 TROOPS

CBS Announcer: "Vienna—Ten thousand additional German troops arrived here last night in 500 armoured cars and tanks, 2,000 on motor-cycles and 3,000 by train. . . . Masses are shouting, singing, waving flags and milling through the streets. Older people, however, are not so pleased. They ask whether Vienna, renowned for music, art and beauty, might not now lose the glories of a once mighty world capital. . . ."

6.30 a.m. BEDROCK OF SECURITY

CBS Announcer: "We take you now to London, England".

6.31 a.m.

Sir Frederick Whyte: "Good morning, everybody. Neither England nor France to-day is worrying so much about Austria and Germany actually coming together, but it's the way in which it is being done. It has shaken the foundations of Europe as nothing has done since the Great War itself. This has had a sobering—I think I ought to say also a consolidating effect—in Britain. . . . What is uppermost to-day, is the feeling that if all these interesting treaties we've made amount to nothing, then we've got down to the bedrock of security, which means the power to protect ourselves . . . ".

English Announcer: "Sir Frederick is going down to Parliament which opens in just three hours. He has consented to go on the air later and give you a first hand account of the Prime Minister's statement. We return you now to America".

7.5 a.m. VIENNA STOCK EXCHANGE CLOSED

CBS Announcer: "Vienna—The stock exchange has been ordered closed until further notice to prevent flight of capital. . . . Konrad Henlein, leader of the Sudeten-German party (in Czechoslovakia) told rejoicing followers, 'Victory is ours' ".

7.32 a.m. SLOW APPROACH . . .

CBS Announcer: "Adolf Hitler is slowly approaching Vienna. The winding roads along the Danube River were so thickly massed with cheering throngs that the motor-car could proceed at only the slowest pace. It appears that it may take Hitler many hours to reach Vienna".

7.55 a.m. SLOW RECOGNITION . . .

CBS Announcer: "Washington—Our government is going to take its time about recognising Germany's annexation of Austria. The State Department is determined to proceed slowly and cautiously. The government won't even consider a course of action until it receives official notice that Austria is no longer an independent nation. Also the State Department will wait to see what Great Britain and France intend to do".

9.25 a.m. DUCE TO FUEHRER

CBS Announcer: "Rome—In a telegram to Hitler, Il Duce declared: 'My attitude is determined by the friendship between our two countries consecrated in the Rome-Berlin axis' ".

11.14 a.m. FIVE O'CLOCK IN VIENNA

CBS Announcer: "Adolf Hitler has just entered Vienna. The German Chancellor and his motor cavalcade escort passed through the city limits a few minutes before eleven o'clock, New York time, or five o'clock Vienna time".

12.30 p.m. THE HARD FACT

CBS Announcer: "We take you now to London, England".

Sir Frederick Whyte: "I've just this moment come up from the House of Commons. The government was there in full force. Mr. Winston Churchill was in his usual place below the gangway, Lady Astor sitting behind him, and the benches were reasonably well filled. One notable absentee was Mr. Lloyd George.

12.32 p.m.

"The Prime Minister, instead of making a long speech, spoke exactly twenty-six minutes. . . . He used these words, 'The hard fact is that nothing could have arrested what has actually happened—unless this country and other countries had been prepared to use force'.

"The sting of the speech came in the tail. Mr. Chamberlain told the House that the programme of British rearmament had always been subject to review in the light of international developments, and it would be idle to pretend that recent events did not constitute a change justifying such review. These are the words on which Chamberlain sat down: 'The government has decided to make such a review and in due course will announce the further steps they might think it necessary to take'. . . ".

London Announcer: "We return you now to America".

2 p.m. NO FORCE!

CBS Announcer: "Vienna—Adolf Hitler made a short speech after his arrival in Vienna to-day. Hitler shouted: 'No force on earth can stop us. This German Reich never again will fall asunder. Nobody can force it from its road. No threat, no misery, no violence can ever cause this oath to be broken' ".

3 p.m. CBS . . . FROM VIENNA

CBS Announcer: "We take you now to Vienna, Austria".

Edward Murrow: "Hello, America. . . . Herr Hitler is now at the Imperial Hotel. To-morrow there is to be a big parade and at that time he will probably make his major speech. . . . Planes were soaring overhead. There seemed to be literally miles of uniforms; but then the real parade doesn't come until to-morrow.

"The banks in Vienna closed this morning. Long lines formed outside before they opened. And they remained open only for a short time and then closed. It is stated that limited payments will probably be resumed sometime to-morrow.

3.7 p.m.

"*Die Stürmer*, Julius Streicher's anti-Semitic paper, appeared on the streets here to-day. It was announced that the usual disabilities against Jews will apply in connection with the plebiscite to be held on April 10th. . . . Please don't think that everyone in Vienna was out to greet Herr Hitler to-day. There is tragedy as well as rejoicing in this city to-night. The speed with which the new organisation has been established is truly amazing. Those who had been true to the part have been rewarded. Those without sincerity or enthusiasm sufficient for the requirements of the party have been replaced. . . . It's of course impossible to determine the amount of reorganisation that has taken place and is not yet finished. I am told that it is progressing with remarkable speed. . . . The German soldiers are obviously enjoying themselves. A number of them are quartered in a building just next to the one from which I am speaking. They're sleeping on straw and there are stacked rifles and iron helmets arranged neatly along the wall. They don't talk a great deal with the Viennese, but they're always courteous and they certainly give the impression of iron discipline.

"Well, to-morrow will be another day of festivity in Vienna. It's possible that the course of certain events now scheduled may be changed. This regime, of course, maintains the greatest secrecy regarding plans, but when it decides to move, it acts with appalling speed and decisiveness".

6 p.m. TERROR

CBS Announcer: "In Vienna and throughout Austria, the Jews and other non-Nazi groups are terror-stricken over the threat of persecution. Germany's foremost Jew-baiter, Julius Streicher, is reported on his way to Vienna. Austrian Catholics are also fearful, and the Vatican official newspaper in Rome says they have reason to be. The Jewish director of the Vienna Opera, Bruno Walter, has resigned and Dr. Hermann Roebbling, another Jew, was removed as head of the famous old Burg Theatre. The former Austrian Chancellor Kurt Schuschnigg is under arrest in his Vienna home and ex-President Miklas is virtually a prisoner also".

10.47 p.m. VIENNA

Edward Murrow: "Hello, America, this is Vienna calling. It's nearly five in the morning, and all is quiet. . . . SS men in black uniforms stand guard at the Imperial Hotel where Herr Hitler is spending the night. . . . The city has been comparatively quiet since before midnight. I visited several night clubs and restaurants. There was little singing of military songs, practically no drunkenness, nothing that might be called a celebration".

THE FIFTH DAY
TUESDAY, MARCH 15

5.6 a.m. IN HEROES' SQUARE

CBS Announcer: "Vienna is now witnessing one of the greatest spectacles the city has ever known in its long and colourful history. Right now in Heroes' Square, in front of the old Imperial Palace, hundreds of thousands of persons are massed to hear Adolf Hitler speak. It is the first major address the German Fuehrer has ever made on his native soil".

5.8 a.m. "I PROCLAIM MY MISSION"

CBS Announcer: "A broadcast is in progress describing the ceremonies preceding Adolf Hitler's speech. Our translator is standing-by here to translate at intervals what he hears from Vienna. We take you now to Vienna, Austria".

German Announcer: "Ladies and gentlemen, you are now hearing a reception from Vienna for Reich Chancellor Hitler, who will deliver his speech any minute. . . . Dr. Arthur von Seyss-Inquart, the leader of the Austrian part of the Reich, is now addressing the people. . . . Dr. Seyss-Inquart is saying: 'I announce to the entire world that Chancellor Hitler has entered the capital of Austria—Vienna. The Reich has been reorganised and has been re-established and you, my leader, are greeted as the creator of a new Reich. My leader, we know only one thing—that is, our most sincere thanks to you'".

Translator: "And now the Chancellor himself is addressing the multitude. You are now hearing Chancellor Hitler, who has just said: 'German men and women! Within the last few days a change has taken place in the union of the German nation, which is being witnessed by millions to-day, the importance of which, however, can and will be estimated in its entire significance only by the generations to come. . . '".

German Announcer: "The cheers have died down. The two German national anthems, the Deutschland Lied and the Horst Wessel Lied, the latter long forbidden in Austria, have died down; we can now conclude this special broadcast arranged for the benefit of our American listeners. Your announcer returns you to America".

6.3 a.m. CORRESPONDENTS IMPRISONED

CBS Announcer: "Vienna—Shortly before Hitler began to speak, about thirty-five foreign correspondents assigned to cover the address, found themselves prisoners in the Chancellory. They were told they would be released fifteen minutes after Hitler started speaking".

7 a.m. NO HALF-WAY MEASURES

CBS Announcer: "We take you now to Vienna, Austria".

Edward Murrow: "Hello, America. This is Vienna calling. Herr Hitler has made his speech from the balcony of the Hapsburg or King's Palace. He arrived again standing in an open car. He went up to the balcony and looked out over a sea of upraised arms, people shouting, cheering. There was certainly nothing half-hearted about the cheering. . . ".

8 a.m. CBS . . . TO VIENNA . . . TO BERLIN

CBS Announcer: "Columbia takes you once again to Vienna for a broadcast of the ceremonies attending the visit of Austria's new leader, Adolf Hitler. Hitler, we have just been told, is at the war memorial in the Austrian capital. We switch you now to Vienna, Austria".

But it proved to be impossible to broadcast directly from Vienna to America at this time. An instantaneous switch was made to Berlin and the Berlin announcer's report of the Viennese scene (coming to him by land line) was broadcast to the Columbia audience.

Berlin Announcer: "Hello, America. This is Berlin calling. Berlin trying to give you some idea of what is going on in Vienna on the Maria Theresian Square now. We have to explain why we cannot speak to you from Vienna itself; why we cannot actually describe the moving scene to you from there. We've only got a single land line from Vienna to Germany and all we can do is to pass on to you what is going over the German stations at this moment. I am listening myself, as you are too, to what is going on in Vienna.

"The Chancellor is now standing on the grandstand on the base of the War Memorial on Maria Theresian Square, on Vienna's Mainstrasse. He is looking up now to his squadrons of German air force flying past and opening the military display. The first squadron is now up in the air. It's the German Air Force parading with 400 planes, and that is apparently a grand sight for the Viennese. I think that this scene this afternoon will mark the end of all the surprising events of the week-end. Quieter times will start, and times probably full of all kinds of decrees, laws and so on that will regulate the life of Austria within the new German Empire".

6.55 p.m. HITLER BACK TO GERMANY

CBS Announcer: "Adolf Hitler has gone back to Germany, and now the rest of Europe is waiting anxiously to see what he will do next. To-morrow morning Hitler will make his triumphal re-entry into Berlin, and the German capital is planning the greatest welcome in its history".

12 midnight. MUSSOLINI TO SPEAK

CBS Announcer: "In Rome to-morrow morning, Premier Mussolini will deliver an address in which he is expected to define the attitude of Italy toward the conquest of Austria. The speech is being awaited with great interest in all capitals as one that may have an important bearing on European peace".

THE SIXTH DAY
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 16

6.45 a.m. MAJOR FEY, SUICIDE

CBS Announcer: "Vienna—Major Emil Fey, former Vice-Chancellor, has just shot his wife and 19-year-old son, after which he killed himself. The tragedy occurred just twenty-four hours after Adolf Hitler made his triumphant entry into Austria".

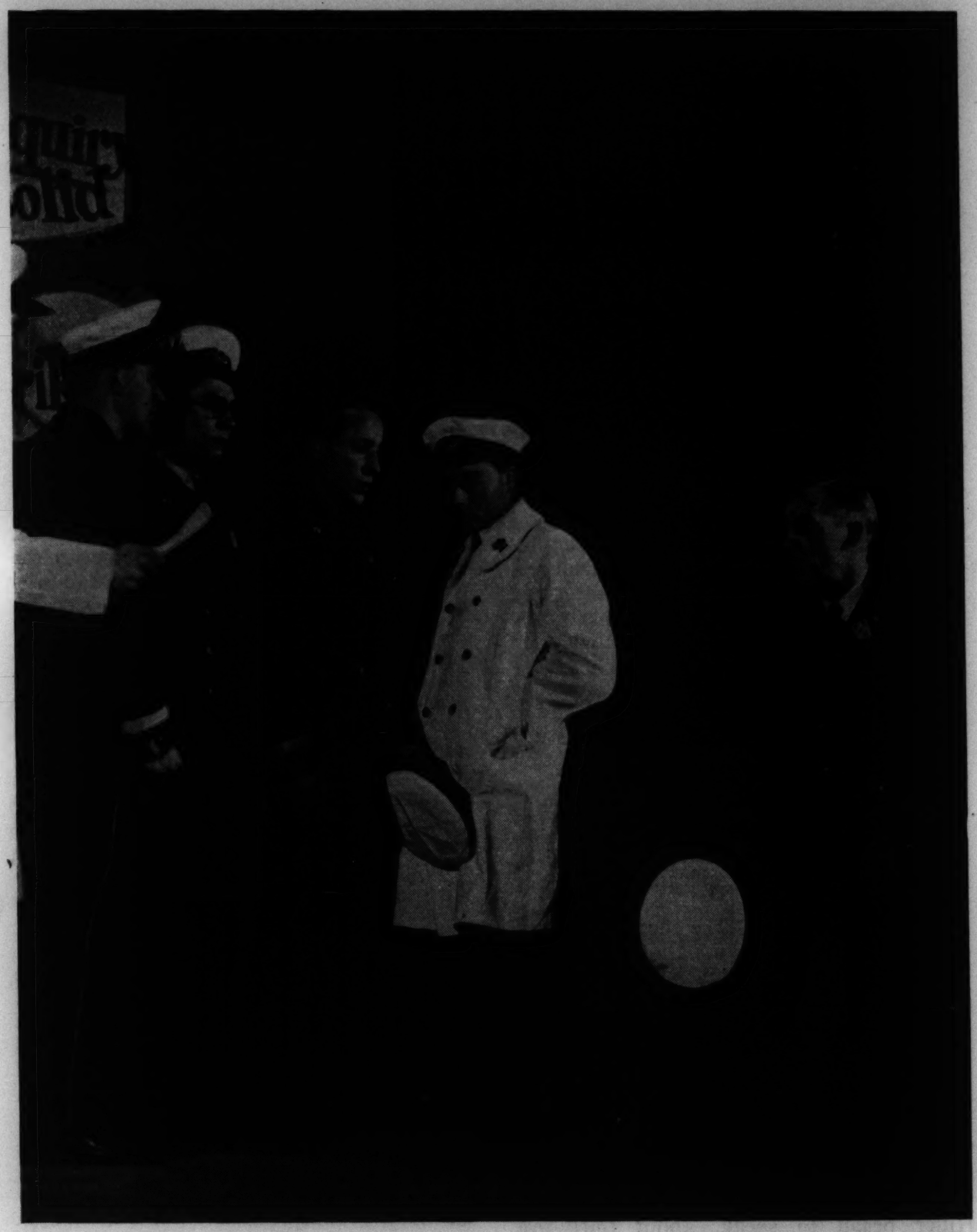
11 a.m. MUSSOLINI . . . FROM ROME

CBS Announcer: "We bring you now a special trans-Atlantic broadcast by Premier Benito Mussolini . . . " (*Columbia's Broadcast continued for several days. We are compelled to end our extract at this point.*)

An account of the Am

"LIVING NE

by PAU



From the London production "Living Theatre No. 1" (*John Vickers*)

DRAMATISED facts, living news, staged current events—these find a thirsty public in the United States to-day. New forms and techniques are being used in this effort to meet a demand for information; a demand which arose largely as a result of the great depression. Until 1929, the American public took most things for granted. There were money and jobs around. Since then, they're asking why.

March of Time on radio and film helps to answer this. The flood of photo-journalism that sweeps America is another part of the reply. Backward in England, the theatre in America is tackling subjects of burning topical interest. Labour struggles, unionism, strike-breaking, problems of slum clearance and cheap power. The New York stage is alive. Part of its vitality must be traced to the Federal Theatre Project and its breakaway groups like the Mercury Theatre. For sure, the Federal Theatre Project has given one new idea to the theatre—*The Living Newspaper*.

The Federal Theatre Project was set up under general Government works relief programme (the WPA) early in 1934. At first, 150 actors and technicians were employed on the scheme, which was supervised by the kind of army officials who directed relief work in general. The plays were old favourites: *The School for Scandal* and *Skinner's Dress Suit* shared an engagement. Most of them were presented in obscure theatres and without adequate equipment or professional advice. Theatre workers as a whole were loth to associate themselves with the Project. Aside from the stigma of "being on relief", they were afraid of the low professional standard of the scheme and its effect on their reputations.

Criticisms of the Project, backed by letters in the Press from serious playwrights and actors, eventually reached responsible ears at Washington. As a result, a change in administration was authorised. Mrs. Hallie Flanagan, for years an organiser of independent theatrical ventures, was given complete charge of the Federal Theatre Project; Elmer Rice accepted the post of Regional Director for New York. Mr. Rice, in particular, was trusted to make the Project something more than a meagre provider for starving theatre workers.

To-day, the Federal Government plays have an audience of half a million a week in all parts of America, many people in such areas as New England and the deep South seeing a theatre for the first time in their lives.

The Living Newspaper is only a small division of the main Project. According to Morris Watson, original supervisor of the scheme, the idea of *The Living Newspaper* was born in October 1935, and directly arose from Elmer Rice. No one person, however, can take credit for the idea. It has grown as a result of collective effort by producers, writers and actors. In 1935, the Newspaper Guild of New York was looking for some way in which to absorb a few of its unemployed journalists in the recently reorganised Theatre Project. The Guild's Unemployment Committee went to Elmer Rice, who suggested that a project be formed to present news on the stage. Morris Watson, an unemployed newspaperman, was chosen to head the project.

There were some precedents for presenting news on the stage. In 1933–34 a 'smart' commercial revue, *As Thousands Cheer*, used newspaper headlines as a structure for its satiric sketches. The Workers' Laboratory Theatre and some vaudeville producers had attempted to dramatise news events. Of most of these precedents Morris Watson, Elmer Rice and their associates were unaware, but they acknowledge a debt to *The March of Time*.

They began by dramatising news of the tabloid kind—Tart Shoots Lover—but soon realised that by the time their skits reached the stage the news would be dead. Rice then suggested and authorised the dramatisation of controversial news, which by being controversial would remain alive until it could be presented on the stage. The staff, relying upon Rice's authority, set to work to dramatise the international topic of the moment—the struggle in Ethiopia.

Months of research by newspaper men attached to the Project resulted in the selec-

An American Stage Sensation

"LIVING NEWSPAPER"

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tion and authentication of the crucial episodes of the massacre and its international repercussions. Only incidents admitted to by all parties were used; claims and counterclaims of importance were given as such in the mouths of the officials who had presented them at the time. No claim was stated without opposition reply.

Opening scenes in Italy and Abyssinia were followed by League of Nations' conferences, the outlining of the Hoare-Laval plan, Hoare's defence in Parliament and a cross-section of scenes representing the currents of British public opinion which forced Hoare's resignation and Baldwin's admission of error. Statesmen, soldiers, politicians were all represented realistically on the stage by actors.

Ethiopia was shown to the Press on January 24th, 1936. It was well praised. Just before its public opening, the WPA officials stepped in and stopped production. "Almost certainly," a Government-sponsored play about such a subject would be construed by Italy as "an unfriendly act."

Press and theatre protested against the ban. Elmer Rice, stating that he had been given complete authority to produce, resigned. "Government censorship of *The Living Newspaper*," he said, "would mean the end of its usefulness."

Undaunted, *The Living Newspaper* writers at once set out to dramatise a home subject—the problem of over-production in agriculture, the efforts of the New Deal to solve the question by legislation and the results of the Supreme Court's invalidation of the AAA. *Triple-A Plowed Under*, directed by Joe Losey, received wide Press acclaim.

The story of the agricultural problem in its developing phases was narrated through quickly shifting scenes in which type characters expressed the viewpoints of the classes which they typified. Drama critics were surprised at the liveliness of these figures, which were never characterised fully because of lack of space. Use was made of expressionist scenery and contrapuntal dialogue. In addition, this second edition of *The Living Newspaper* gave a brief background of the post-war years of boom and depression in relation to agriculture, rather like the prologue to the documentary film *To-day We Live*—a part of the play which raised protests from Tory newspapers.

The next edition, also directed by Losey, was a survey of the events of the year 1935 in social terms. It was described as weak and diffused even by sympathetic critics; but it is worth noting that each successive edition of *The Living Newspaper* proceeded further from immediate news events towards a generalised interpretation of their root causes.

Losey again directed the fourth edition, *Injunction Granted!* which was exhaustively criticised by a Press now accustomed to seeing news on the stage. Here in thirty scenes was the story of American Labour. The play drew these conclusions: that throughout their history the American workers have always been exploited by their employers with the aid of the courts, that the latter issued injunctions freely, interpreted the Constitution in favour of the employer and utilised the legal frame-up to send working-class leaders to jail and death. Criticism was made that the second half of the play introduced the internal Labour issue of Lewis's C.I.O. struggle against Green's A.F. of L. and thus confused the main issue of the argument.

Connected with the writing side of *The Living Newspaper* from outset, Arthur Arent was responsible for the script of *Power*, which dealt with electricity and the T.V.A. plan, and, with a staff of thirty research workers, for the production now playing in New York . . . *One-Third of a Nation* . . . The title is taken from Roosevelt's second inauguration speech that he found ". . . one-third of a nation ill-housed, ill-clad and ill-nourished."

It tells swiftly and vividly the story of Manhattan's slums, of the greed of its landlords, of public apathy towards the injustices and legal violations that have permitted this ghastly state of living to occur. Against Howard Bay's magnificent set of a cross-sectioned tenement, four stories tall, with rotting balustrades, inadequate fire-escapes and filthy dark rooms, there is told a chronicle of real estate in Manhattan, embracing the system of land ownership that permitted the Astor and Rhinelander families to exploit their property, a dramatic fire-outbreak, a cholera plague, an episode of juvenile delinquency, a rent strike, documentary evidence by means of a film of the housing conditions in New York City to-day, and a lantern-slide tour round New York as it was in the fifties.

The style is bitingly satirical and openly Left Wing and has no respect for persons either dead or living. No small part is played by "The Voice" of *The Living Newspaper* itself, questioning and explaining through a loud-speaker in the auditorium. On a much bigger scale and without the personal interviews, . . . *One-Third of a Nation* . . . is the theatrical counterpart of Elton and Anstey's *Housing Problems*. It is real documentary theatre.

Not all the current New York plays that dramatise labour problems and news events are by the Federal Theatre Project. The Mercury Theatre, a group that broke away from the Project, is playing Marc Blitzstein's brilliant opera *The Cradle Will Rock*, the story of unionism in Steel Town, U.S.A. It was first produced as a Federal Theatre Project last year, banned before the first night, with the result that Blitzstein and some of the actors found another theatre at the eleventh hour and put on the play without scenery or properties, Blitzstein himself having to take several parts. This winter the Mercury Theatre put it on with Orson Welles producing but still without scenery. It is playing to packed houses and has started a vogue for plays without scenery, a vogue that is causing anxiety to the Scene-Shifters' Union who may find themselves picketing plays which present their own cause.

Unionism is again the chief theme running through the brightest and most satirical revue Broadway has seen for years—*Pins and Needles*—produced, financed, written and acted by members of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union. Its high-spot numbers are "Sing Us a Song with Social Significance", "One Big Union for Two" and "Four Little Angels of Peace Are We", the latter being sung by Hitler, Mussolini, Anthony Eden and a Japanese General.

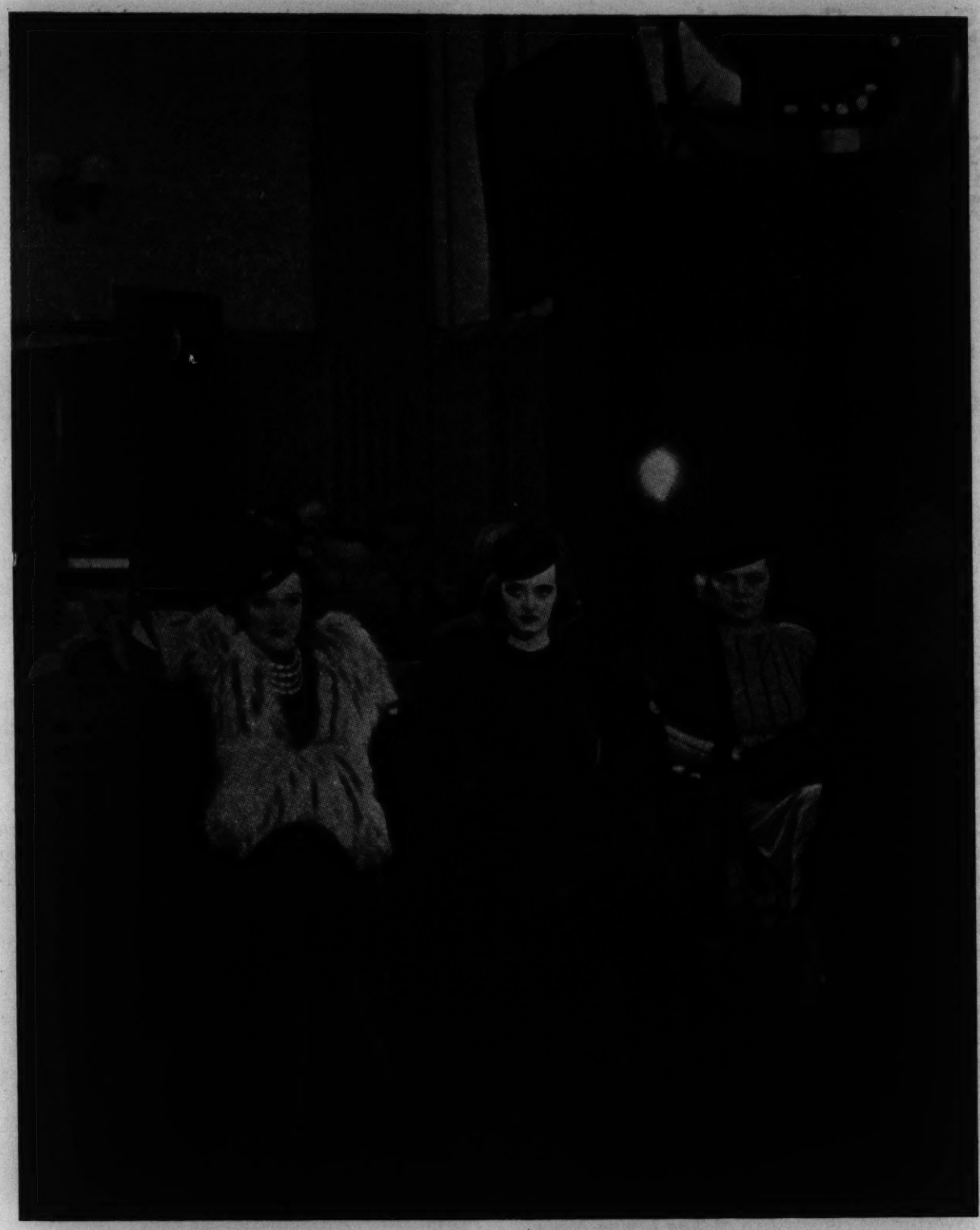
Its actors are from New York's department stores. What began by being a modest little revue by garment workers (New York's biggest industry) is now so much of a Broadway success that you can't buy a seat for weeks ahead. Two companies are taking it out on the road and a movie is being discussed.

While Labour in London digs into the sacred graves of the Tolpuddle Martyrs, Labour over there is dramatising the vital issues of the moment and at the same time bringing a new creative spirit into the theatre. But then they don't stand nonsense about a Lord Chamberlain nor do they have restrictions about the representation of living personages on the stage.

LONDON'S "LIVING NEWSPAPER"

Borrowing the idea from America, the Unity Theatre Players, London, have just produced the first English *Living Newspaper*—"Busmen". John Allan, the director, bravely attempts to dramatise the main events preceding, during, and after the Bus Strike, 1937. Being unable to portray well-known living people on the English stage or to use their voices robs the play of much of its vitality, although the writers have invented clever devices to overcome this handicap. There are faults: relation between The Voice of the *Living Newspaper* (via loudspeaker) and the staged action is ill-established: the continuity is lazy: the script could stand cutting: acting values are below those of the American productions. But this is a first effort, obviously with little finance and little time for rehearsal. It sets a good example for future productions with brisker technique and greater use of documentary evidence. But its producers should remember that their audience must be the man-in-the-street, not the "converted intellectual."

P.R.



WHEN A STAR WALKS OUT . . .

BETTE DAVIS, *Warner Bros. star of 'Jezebel', 'Petrified Forest', 'Of Human Bondage', 'Marked Woman' and many other films, writes on the work of a screen actress.*

THE most important consideration in a star's career is choice of story. . . . Studios employ many talented people for the sole purpose of finding suitable material for their top players, and only in rare cases is the star permitted to make her own selection. Her opinion may be asked, but the final decision rests with the studio officials. Usually Joe Doaks on Main Street knows what her next assignment will be as soon as she does—it all depends on who reads the morning papers first.

I personally believe this is not as unfair as it seems, for I am of the opinion that actors and actresses are notoriously bad judges of story material. Principally interested in the part intended for us and the number of good meaty scenes there are for us to play, we are apt to lose sight completely of weak and insignificant plot construction or the development of the rest of the characters in the story. . . .

Neither does it follow that the studios are always right. Often a studio has a script ready to go into production with an inferior and uninteresting leading role for either the actor or the actress, but the picture must be made immediately to meet a release date. Since players are put under contract in order to retain their exclusive services, they must be paid whether they are working or not; and when they are not working they are a worrisome item of expense. If the studio has scheduled nothing suitable for the star at such a time, she may be requested to go into this production even though they know it is unjust, and there is nothing for her to do but play the part, knowing the public will think less of her for it—or refuse to do it, which usually results in suspension without salary for as long as it takes to make the picture in question. In short, she gets spanked either way.

When the public reads in the newspapers that a star has "walked out on" her studio, their natural reaction is to say, "Tsk! Tsk! —Temper—temper . . . !" Actually the reason for it is more likely to be her refusal to disappoint her audiences by letting them see her in a role wholly unsuited to her talents and below the standard that she has consistently fought to maintain.

The number of pictures a star makes annually is almost as important as the selection of her stories. It is easy for an audience to tire of an actress it sees too often—and it appears to get just as weary of her if it doesn't see her often enough. In my present contract there is no limit to the number of pictures I make in a year, but I believe that a contract limiting an actress to four is neither detrimental to her career nor unfair to her studio. If I were free-lancing, three would be my limit; first, because screen acting is such exhausting work that I think we need long vacations between pictures; and second, because it is almost impossible to find more than three stories in a year's time which are both well-suited to me and worth your money at the box office.

Nothing is more staggering to me than to be asked how I create a character. There just isn't any one answer to that question. It depends entirely on what the assignment happens to be.

If I am to play the leading lady in a modern picture, my worries as an actress are concerned with wardrobe, hairdress, learning the script, and interpreting it to make the most of whatever opportunities it offers me. I make a practice of discussing all these things with the director as soon as possible, to make sure that our conceptions of the character are enough alike to avoid misunderstandings and costly waste of time on the set while the film is in production.

I should like to add, here, that I have never played a part which I did not feel was a person very different from myself. The character I am playing stays behind in my dressing-room at the end of the day and is waiting for me there the following morning.

I do not intend this to sound as if I were "arty" about my work. On the contrary, I am extremely workmanlike. Perhaps it is explained by the fact that I have never—except when I am actually working—been able to realise that I am known as an actress. You have no idea how grateful I am for this frame of mind in Hollywood, where it is not easy to keep a normal outlook on oneself as a person. While I am acting I am living in an imaginary world, bringing imaginary people to life, just as I used to "live" the fairy stories I read when I was a little girl. And I think it's the grandest game in the world. Whether or not I am always successful at it, I am constantly trying to make my audience know these "phantom" friends of mine as well as I do.

When the director and I have agreed on the appearance of the character, the head costume designer (Mr. Orry Kelly) and I confer for hours. He makes many sketches which we discuss as to their suitability for both her and me, and when we have finally decided what she is going to wear, the pins, shears and needles start flying in the workroom.

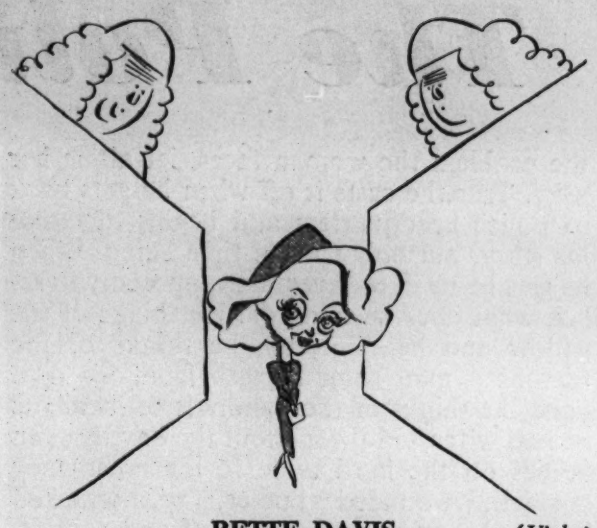
Fitting and sewing costumes year in and year out, the skilful women in the workroom are faithful and loyal to their stars. Though they receive no credit for the final product, they are as interested as we are in seeing that gowns are perfect in every detail. Often they are more patient than we during the long hours we must stand for fittings. They know how the camera will emphasise the slightest wrinkle or bad line, and avoiding these defects is a matter of pride with them.

The completed gowns must be tested before the camera. This is very important, for even though our costume designers are trained to know what colours, materials and body lines are photographically "right", they sometimes make mistakes. A costume which is charming to the eye often proves most unattractive photographically, and must be replaced or changed. Preliminary tests of wardrobe may save the studio large sums of money which might otherwise have to be spent on retakes during production.

"Hair tests" are necessary for the same reason. If the camera doesn't happen to like our hairdress, it can do disastrous things to us. And unless the cameraman is accustomed to working with us, he usually wants to make photographic tests to discover our best "angles" and the most effective lighting for our features.

By the time all of these tests have been made and approved by the director and the production head, we are ready to start on the actual work of making the picture.

All of this, as I said, is the customary preparation for a simple, modern leading role. If, however, I am assigned to portray a famous character from history or a well-known fictional character, or a person with an accent unfamiliar to me, the little duties really start piling up. Endless hours must be spent in reading about them, studying their lives and habits, until I feel I know them so well I couldn't possibly do anything inconsistent with their characterisation. Imagine how much preparation Paul Muni must have spent on Pasteur and Zola. I also collect pictures of these people at all stages of their lives if they are historical, so as to be able to



BETTE DAVIS (*Vicky*)

resemble them as closely as possible physically. Make-up must be minutely tested to get the nearest facial similarity we can, and the costumes of the period must be studied thoroughly to avoid anachronisms and errors in detail.

For a fictional character such as Mildred in *Of Human Bondage*, the novel is used as a textbook—read and re-read until I am thoroughly acquainted with her every thought. Scattered descriptions are carefully checked for indications of dress and mannerism.

Once we start working on a production, that is *all* we are able to do until it is finished. After hours, an actress who is conscientious about her work is too tired mentally and physically to think of anything but a nice, long, beautiful rest. Fortunately or unfortunately, I am one of those. If the material in the picture is worthless, one has to work twice as hard to make something of it; but I have a sincere desire always to be able to say when the picture is finished that I have done the very best I could with the part.

YOU smiled when I said we get dog-tired. The surest way I know to convince you of this is to show you just how we work, by describing an average *shooting day*.

I get the gentle but compelling touch on the shoulder between six and six-thirty in the morning—depending on how far I am living from the studio and how elaborate my make-up is for the picture I am doing. After I have arrived at the studio, it takes at least two hours to have my hair dressed and dried and my make-up applied. There is usually just time to get to the set by nine o'clock and put on my costume. I am then ready to rehearse for the first scene of the day.

The amount of rehearsing we do is entirely dependent on the director. Some directors believe that lots of it insures a better performance when the cameras start grinding. I agree with them. As far as I'm concerned, there can never be too much rehearsal, for during this time the cast learns to work together and often discovers bits of business that give the screen play naturalness and smoothness.

When we have finished rehearsing, the cameraman is given free rein to light the set. Stand-ins, resembling the actors in height, weight and general colouring, go through the action to be shot, while the cameraman arranges the lights. This gives the cast a chance to cool off, refresh their make-up, see that all the curls are where they belong, and to discuss the scene with the director if necessary. Then one final rehearsal for the actors, the camera and the sound department—and the scene is ready to be taken.

If a scene is shot only once, the incident is recorded as a major miracle. More commonly it has to be repeated from three to as many as fifteen times. Before a take is O.K.d it has to be right for the director as far as performances are concerned, for the cameraman, and for the sound department. The last is a particularly exacting master. The sound man must hear every word distinctly, unimpaired by outside noises such as airplane motors, passing trucks, coughs, footfalls, or any of a million and one other incidental sounds. Since the members of the crew know how difficult it is to keep a scene alive beyond the third take, they do everything in their power to keep things going smoothly. You never saw such a display of mass patience and precaution! Often, of course, the actors themselves are responsible for spoiling the shot. We just can't get that "something" the director is looking for—and we *have* been known to muff lines. The success of a day on the set is determined by the degree of co-operation between director, crew and players.

An hour for lunch, then back to freshen make-up and hairdress and begin again. The day is usually over at six, after which most of us spend half an hour in a projection room seeing the rushes of the previous day's shooting. Now we go to our dressing-rooms, remove make-up, put on street clothes—and go home, arriving there between seven and eight o'clock, slightly the worse for a working day of from twelve to fourteen hours.

But that is not the end of it. Dinner, then off to a quiet corner with the script, to batten down enough dialogue to carry us through to-morrow. For us, ten-thirty is bed-time; there's very little a make-up man can do with circles under our eyes.

A day's work, and work it is—every minute of it. I don't think you can name any other profession that requires so many actual working hours spent in producing something to be seen and judged by millions of people the world over. It is largely our awareness of responsibility to all those people that makes the actual shooting of a picture so nerve-racking. Every take must be approached as if it were the one which you will see in your theatre. Everything we've got must go into everything we do.

Fortunately, inside most of us is the love to create, and we are more than willing to devote the best years of our lives to it. Hollywood pays us well, but the applause we receive from our audiences stimulates us to go on and do finer things. We want you to let us know you like us. Call it childlike if you will: but since our profession is dedicated to bringing you moments of pleasure, the measure of our success is your response to what we do. You, the audience, are literally the fuel that keeps the fire going. Never for a minute think we are bored by your praise. It is what we live for.

Extracted from Bette Davis's contribution to 'We Make the Movies' by kind permission of the publishers, Faber & Faber. The book is reviewed on page 96.

The Police Reporter

I PICKED the note up from the dresser. It read: "Dear Jack—I am taking this way out so you can go back to your four-bit whore, you bastard, you. Mary."

On the bed, writhing and squirming, was a good looking 22-year-old girl. She had taken poison. I, a police reporter, was there with the officers. She was shot to the emergency hospital for treatment, but it did no good. She died.

Can you imagine such a note from one who is about to die? Even if she was the prostitute she was, even if she believed her life was a shattered wreck, she was still good looking. She could have gotten by without much trouble. Yet the workings of the human mind are peculiar to the layman (and, I suspect, to psychiatrists, too, after hearing scores of them offer contradictory testimony from the witness stand). Here this girl, her mind bent on suicide, takes her last moments to write a note to her pimp, hoping it will hurt him more than anything else she could do. Maybe that is why she wanted to die. Whether it hurt the pimp is another question. I doubt it. There probably was a story behind it all, but I did not have the time to investigate.

A police reporter has an odd, nerve-shattering job. To the morbidly curious, those who love to stand in the way over a dead body, those who must stop in the highway to see the mangled remains of some automobile wreck, those who crowd the criminal courtrooms to take one look at some poor devil about to be sentenced to death and then go home and tell the family about it at the dinner table to a chorus of "Oh's" and "Ah's", it must be grand. Maybe to the cub reporter it is grand, too. But one does not have to be on the job long before blood, dead or mangled bodies, automobile wrecks, fires, emergency hospitals, suicides, crime in all its fantastic forms, jail bars and human beings behind them, begin to drop a curtain over the mind, a curtain of hardness which is not good. It becomes nothing but work. The sound of a siren coming to me through the open window of the press room in police headquarters did not indicate a means of satisfying any morbid curiosity of mine, it just meant more work. I saw mothers' tears, wives' tears, husbands' tears, the tears of all the loved ones of the thousand and one victims.

I, like a ghoul, had to get a story about, a story to be read by thousands of morbidly curious, a story which meant more circulation for the newspaper which employed me. The city editor and the managing editor were demanding. They, of course, did not have to see those bodies, they did not have to talk to parents, wives, husbands, or sweethearts of the victim; all they had to do was sit at a desk in the office and demand more gruesome details, details which the reader would gobble up in the evening.

Reader interest, they called it.

They are right in a commercial sense, of course. The more blood which can be scattered on the front page, the more papers will be sold. But the police reporter, talking to some woman freshly widowed by a suicide husband, with three or four children to support, and no one to support them, does not think of sales. He cannot help, no matter how long he has been in the business, thinking of the problem the woman faces, let alone her grief. True, he casts it off when he gets back to police headquarters and begins dictating his story, but only for the time being. When he gets home in the evening, supposedly to relax, what does he think of? He thinks of the widow and her children, he thinks of the reasons a man sought death from his own hand, he thinks of the hundreds of incidents he had witnessed throughout the day, broken bodies on the hard table in the emergency hospital, wounded bodies, pain-wracked bodies. He tries to throw it off and cannot. He finally gets to sleep, only to wake up in the morning and go through it again. It's just the same, only the names and faces are different.

Back in journalism school I was told that blood, women and prominent names were the requisites of all good news stories. They are. Gather all three in a story and you will probably get a slighter grunt from the city editor than you would if nothing happened to "break" throughout the day. In other words if someone commits a sensational suicide, kills his wife or someone else, the city editor is pleased. The managing editor probably told him it was a very good story.

If some too ardent sweetheart shoots her inamorato on a down-town street and the story gets to the office a few minutes too late for the next edition, the police reporter gets hell because he missed the edition. Of course he used up all of his time at a pace his friends, if they could have seen him, would have said he was crazy to travel. It often seemed to me the city editor gloated over the fact I had missed the edition, but, in truth, he was sorry the girl did not shoot her boy friend soon enough.

I SPENT ten years as a police reporter in West Coast cities, seven more as a political reporter. I do not know which was the worst. I can sit around now and think of the lives I have ruined, the scandal and turmoil I have directly caused, the private tragedies I have spilled out to the world. While in Fresno, California, I can recollect how I altered the tax rate a nickel on the hundred dollars of assessed valuation. I brought it down that nickel in the face of hypocritical, church-going politicians. That seems like a ray of sunshine in the gloom. But why did I do it? I did it to make a hit with my city editor. Why would the city editor like it? Because the managing editor would like it. And why did the managing editor like it? Because it would make people, the readers and potential readers, think the only thing between them and the grafting politicians was the dear old newspaper. Therefore they would give their support to the newspaper, subscribe for it, advertise in it, all of which meant cash in the cash register in the newspaper's business office.

I have to laugh now when I think of one of my city editors. When I worked for him I used to gnash my teeth, even have bad dreams about him. He was a small-town city editor, henpecked at home, but a devil in the office. A bridge-playing, courteous gentleman at home, with very little experience on what we called "the street", entertaining the very doctors, dentists and attorneys, he gave me hell for not printing more fully some little incident which came to the public notice, but which would ruin the practice of any one of them. To them, at his home, he was a wonderful host, but in the office he demanded their blood. Sometimes he got it, and in his home he offered the most abject apologies, blaming it all on the police reporter. He was that sort of a guy.

Another city editor, one in Los Angeles, knew his business from A to Z. He had, however, the same cold-blooded characteristics all city editors have. He demanded his blood. But he knew what the police reporter was up against. He had been one himself in his younger days. . . .

All this is not conducive to the sleep of a police reporter. God knows he has plenty of things to dream about other than the vagaries of a city editor who never had experience covering police but who demands news.

The reporter generally is equipped with a police badge. What he does with this badge is very much his own business. The police are afraid of a police reporter. He uses the badge to get news. He uses it to bulldoze the people he interviews, to frighten them with the authority of the law despite the fact there is no more authority under that badge than there would be behind a book salesman's business card. Often he goes with the police, in a police automobile, on calls involving shootings, suicides, riots. He muscles into a private home on the heels of the officers, looking much like an officer himself, and the citizens promptly think he is an officer and tell him things they would not dream of telling if they knew him for what he is. If there is a photograph of the victim or of some member of the family, he steals it and slips it in his coat pocket, or under his belt. Any complaints about the theft to headquarters, he knows will be quashed. Any complaints to his newspaper office after the photograph is published, will mean but a compliment from the city editor. This is journalistic enterprise. In his story he freely uses the names of the officers he accompanied. Those names in the newspaper cover all his crimes against the citizen. Every police reporter, every police officer and a few citizens know these to be facts. Why, it concerns the freedom of the press, and everyone knows the freedom of the press under the constitution is inviolate.

THE freedom of the press goes a little farther than the matter of news. Among other duties of the police reporter is the fixing of traffic tags for himself, the other reporters on the paper, circulation trucks, the city editor and his friends, the managing editor and his friends and the publisher and his

...rinks...

Reporters have made raw-material for some of Hollywood's most exciting and entertaining films.

Do American newspapermen resemble their screen likenesses? Part answer to this comes from CLINT CREWS, who gives a breath-taking account of his experiences as a police reporter.

This article was written for America's smartest and most sophisticated monthly 'Esquire,' from which, as a gesture towards better Anglo-American understanding, we have had kind permission to reprint.

(*Midnight Court, Warner's*)

friends. And any other friends who may loom on the horizon of plain, crooked politics. If the police happen to be a little ornery about fixing the tags (there is often a cry about tag fixing from some irate citizen who was stuck with a goodly fine), the reporter will take the tags to the police judge, who will turn them over to his clerk, who will place opposite the names on the book the notation, "dismissed" or "sentence suspended". It is all done in about five minutes. Sometimes the police reporter gets ten or fifteen tags in the course of the day, ranging from parking overtime to reckless driving, even to driving while intoxicated. He is expected to fix all of these. . . . Police judges have to run for office and a police reporter on the side of a police judge prior to election is a valuable asset. There are so many chances the police reporter has to bring the judge's name before the public, day after day, until John Citizen, seeing the name so often, thinks of nothing but putting his X after it on the ballot. . . .

Driving up the peninsula to San Francisco from Fresno a year or so ago at 4 a.m. I was arrested in one of the many small towns which follow one after the other on the way. I was arrested for doing 65 miles an hour in a 25-mile zone. After I had shown my operator's licence carrying my name and address, business address, namely the name of the paper with which I was employed in Fresno, he asked me what I did on the paper. I told him I was a police reporter.

"Well", he said, "it's too late now as I have the tag made out and these carbons have to go to Sacramento, but if you are a police reporter you will know what to do about it." I did know what to do about it and I did it. I never heard any more from the tag, although I read in a Bay Area newspaper where the judge in that town gave a citizen five days in jail for doing 66 miles an hour at the same intersection at 3 a.m., a day after I was tagged. Perhaps the extra mile and the different hour brought about his sentence.

Many business men wonder sometimes why their offices were raided by the police or the district attorney's office. The police reporter knows. They were raided on the possibility, often probability, such raids would make news. It is true that in the name of justice the offices as a general rule should be raided. However the police reporter is not concerned with justice, he is concerned with the one thing—news. News is all that concerns his editors also. It was the hope of news that made the reporter argue with the chief of police, or district attorney, or captain of detectives, whoever the official might be, the offices should be raided as a smart move on the official's part, a move which would bring justice to a head, a move which would make a hit with the public. Moreover it does make a hit with the public. You can tell it by the newspaper sales. Everyone is satisfied except the victim and no one has much sympathy for him anyhow.

Many times the reporter is acting on direct instructions from his office. No newspaper editor expects the public to keep on buying papers carrying the same news. There must be something new every edition. The raid gives a new angle to the story. For the next edition—well, human ingenuity is always able to dig up something. . . .

Some of the things for which the police reporter, acting on his own initiative or on direct instructions from his office, is responsible, unquestionably reflect to the good of the community. But the good of the community be hanged if it happens to stand in the way of realising the supreme ambition of the press—news. How many times has the daily press published crime stories which placed the police under a handicap and allowed the criminal to escape? Pick up your daily paper and scan the crime stories. Somewhere among them you will find a story portraying police plans with such detail the hunted man would have to be blind as well as dumb not to effect his getaway. Some smart police reporter talked some enthusiastic officer out of the story, the officer being enthusiastic mainly about getting his name in the paper. He gets it, the reporter gets the story, the criminal escapes—everyone is happy except the public, and the public does not seem to care much so long as it can read an interesting story in the paper.

The public would care, however, if it knew that increased fines could be laid at the door of the reporter. It does not know. It just accepts it as bad nature on the part of the police judge and lets it go at that perhaps with the fleeting thought it will vote for someone else at the next election.

(*Continued on next page*)

'The Police Reporter Drinks . . .' *(continued)*

Not only is John Q. Citizen the victim of the police reporter. Sometimes even the chief of police falls in that category through complaints to the mayor or through literary chicanery in the handling of news stories. In one city where I worked a new chief of police had just been appointed. The police reporters gathered in the assembly room at police headquarters to hear his premier address to the police organisation as a whole. The new chief of police threw all of the police reporters out without even giving a thought to their protests. He told them what he had to say to the department was none of their business, nor the business of the press or public. He had the peculiar idea police business should have some semblance of secrecy at least. Throwing the police reporters out on such an occasion had much the same effect on the press "God Save the King" would have at a convention of Irish Republicans.

The boys promptly set out to get him, and get him they did, within the next three months. It was during the noble experiment and the new chief desired to see that the prohibition laws were enforced. He made his error in taking time from his office to personally see that bootleggers were arrested. He liked to head raiding squads. The boys in the press-room learned this, and it was a weapon in their hands, proving later a very effective weapon. At last the time came.

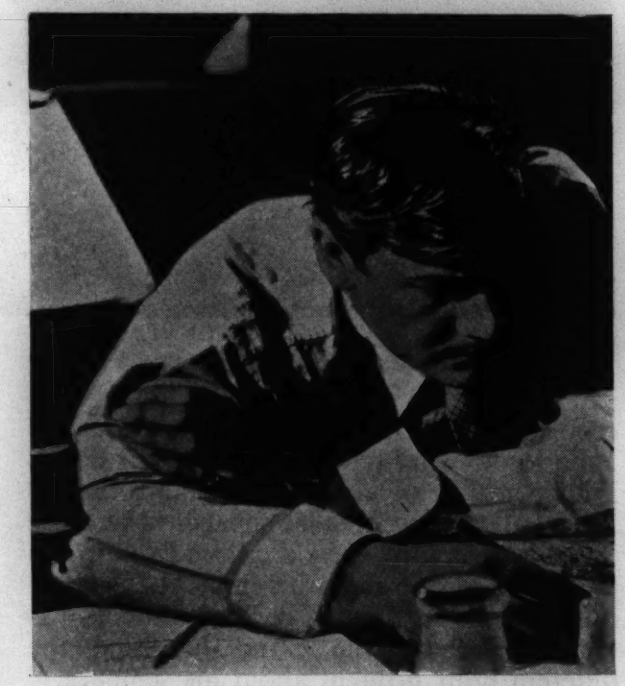
Out heading one of his raiding squads the chief was absent from his office when a bank was stuck up for $40,000. The police reporters went to town on this. They variously started their stories something like this:

"While Chief of Police Doakes was heading a raiding squad in a raid at 222A Street today, bandits held up the First National Bank and escaped with $40,000."

This didn't make much of a hit with anyone, particularly the bankers. A few more stories of this sort and delegations began to call on the mayor. There was a conference between the mayor and the chief. The police reporters were not allowed in on this conference either. They did not have to be. They knew what it was all about. The chief resigned.

Some police reporters are far from loath to earn a little extra dough on the side. Now do not misunderstand. You could not pay one for keeping a story out of the paper, but you might be able to pay him to get a story in the paper. Suppose you are a restaurant proprietor, operating Green's Café. Officers take a criminal who is in the headlines to your restaurant. Grease the police reporter's palm and you will read that night the criminal ate at Green's Café. No grease, no café. It will simply read that Detective-Lieutenant Brown took the killer to a local restaurant. That is called publicity and some newspapers allow it, generally the poorer class which expects publicity money to make up for the shortage in salary paid the police reporter. Others, I am glad to say, will fire a reporter in a minute for this sort of stuff.

Still other police reporters make extra money in more questionable pursuits. They perform as cappers for ambulance chasing attorneys, bail bond brokers, even members of the medical profession. These tradesmen, by the way, frequently see that the police reporter is recompensed for the use of their names in the sensational story of the day. Professional ethics of these gentry forbid open advertising. The capping business is slightly against the law, but minor law does not mean much to a good police reporter. A capper is one who notifies an attorney, a bail bond broker or a physician about a prospective customer. It is easy for the police reporter to get the names and addresses of these potential customers from emergency hospital and police records. There is an automobile accident for instance. A patient or two are brought into the hospital, both drivers report at police headquarters. The police reporter copies down the names of the injured, the names of the drivers and then telephones the attorney giving him the details. The attorney gets in touch with the injured persons right away and talks them into bringing a damage suit against someone. In the case of an ambu-



Joel McCrea in 'Manhattan Madness'

lance chasing physician the police reporter gives him the names of the injured. As only emergency treatment is given in emergency hospitals there is a good opportunity for the physician to pick up a little business in the form of further treatment. His fees like the attorney's are split with the reporter. Bail bond brokers are notified by the police reporter of persons booked at the jail. The bail bond broker will also give the reporter a split on the fee.

Now just because some police reporters are crooked, this is no implication that all of them are tarred with the same feathers any more than because some police officers have the itching palm, all police officers are crooked. But there are crooks among them just as there are in every walk of life.

In a large city on the West Coast there was a police reporter working in cahoots with a police judge in respect to state liquor law violations. The judge usually fined this type of violator the maximum, five hundred dollars. But if the police reporter got to the bootlegger first, things were much easier going. The violator paid the police reporter two hundred dollars, then went into court and escaped with a hundred dollar fine. The police reporter kept one hundred dollars for himself, gave one hundred dollars to the police judge. The bootlegger saved two hundred dollars as it had cost him three hundred dollars instead of the usual five hundred dollar fine. Again everyone was happy—except the taxpayer, and he didn't know anything about it. The judge, with his five hundred dollar fines in a large number of liquor cases, was in strong with the churches and prohibitionists who were responsible time after time for his re-election. In this sort of business, however, one flirts with large but somewhat confining grey walls.

Needless to say the reporter would have been reading the want ads. if his office so much as suspected anything of this nature.

The average police reporter, however, is honest, if not by nature then by preference. He has seen the inside of jails and penitentiaries. He knows what these institutions are like and has not much use for them as habitations.

But it is different when it comes to getting the news. Then the most honest police reporter is capable of practising all the guiles of the game. The law means nothing in the continuous pursuit of the news, either to the reporter, his paper, or to the guardians of the law themselves. The police reporter can almost get away with murder if he is after the news. And God help the police officer whose stern sense of duty compels him to admonish the newsgatherer about breaking the law in the chase. He will probably be shifted "out in the sticks" the next day. A shift "out in the sticks" means the officer has been moved from his pleasant beat to some district where the work is arduous, or monotonous, at any rate unpleasant.

On the other hand the police reporter oft-times helps the police officer in the latter's work. Everyone has heard the time-worn joke of the police officer who had to move the dead horse from University to Second Avenue because he could not spell University. He does not have to move the horse if the police reporter is with him. The reporter will spell University for him. The police reporter, adept at the typewriter, makes out his reports for him at times, does lots of things for the police officer even to putting in a plug for him with the chief. . . .

A police reporter cannot hang around police headquarters all day, day after day, without picking up a few bits of information which he never publishes but which he keeps in the file of his memory. When the time comes he hauls it out and hangs it like the sword of Damocles over the head of some officer from whom he is trying to pry information. It works. If someone other than a reporter attempted to bull-doze the officer in this manner he would get a punch in the nose.

Even the members of the underworld respect the powers of the police reporter. There are a few exceptions, of course, notably the Chicago incident when Jake Lingle died in the dust from a gangster's bullet. But on the whole the police reporter is more or less immune from reprisals.

Often police reporters are called upon by

their editors to take the role of public stool pigeons. During prohibition many editors had the habit of sending the police reporter around to buy drinks at bootlegging dives and then publish his story including the addresses of the dives. Fortunately I was never called upon by my editors to go to such an extreme. I bought the drinks in the dives all right, but my editors never published the addresses. I might say further I bought drinks in many dives of which my editors had no knowledge. I do not know what I would have done if I had been assigned to stool-pigeon work. One must consider a job is a job, still it is a scurvy trick and I would have been between the devil and the deep blue sea. I think now I would have resigned first. Maybe I wouldn't. I do not know. I never had to face the problem. . . .

THE police reporter is also called upon to run down hot tips on automobile accidents immediately they come into his office. Of course, all automobile accidents which make a story come into police headquarters direct, but the reporter must show speed. I suppose some city editors expect the story before the accident occurs. Some printer or office boy would inform the city editor there had been a bad automobile accident at Tulare and A Streets. Promptly my telephone would ring. "Dash out and see what it is", the city editor would demand. He always said, "dash out", never "go out". Well, I would go, not dash, and when I got to the intersection find exactly nothing. I would call the city editor back whereupon he would inform me there must have been an accident, the printer had seen broken glass on the pavement. Broken glass on the pavement, therefore there must have been a couple of people killed. He knew just as well as I did that if anyone had been hurt the accident would have been reported to the police and I would have picked up the story in the routine of chasing the news. He just did not think that way. There were times while I was out on such wild-goose chases something really did break, and I missed it by an hour or so, perhaps missed the chance to swipe a good picture, perhaps missed the chance for a personal interview with the parties concerned. That didn't bother him much; there was broken glass on the pavement.

One often hears in news offices that police reporting is a lazy man's job. Maybe it is and maybe it isn't. A casual glance into the press-room in police headquarters may show you a poker game in progress, or, on the other hand, it may show you a group of men huddled over their telephones, all dictating at once. At another time you will find the press-room deserted. It all depends. Perhaps for hours at a time the police reporters do practically nothing. But a call comes in, hell breaks loose and the work starts right now—fast, nerve-wracking work, work that carries on through lunch, through dinner, with never a single moment's let-down, morbid work, the seeing and talking to persons under the stress of the strongest emotions, emotions which strip them down to their primitive selves; wounded, mangled persons, persons suddenly bereft of their dear ones, persons who in a moment of madness killed the thing they loved the most, ordinary persons like yourself with a vision of the rope or the electric chair coming before them like some dread thing out of the darkness. Ever the rush to telephones, ever the hurry to get the story in for the next edition, ever the hunt for new leads, a frantic, high-strung, wild chase for news.

In his search for news the police reporter often comes across what is commonly known as the third degree. The thwack of the rubber hose coming through the closed door of a private room in police headquarters does not mean much to the police reporter. However, he jots it down in his memory so that when the door opens he can get a story on the confession from one of the thwacking officers.

I wanted to get a picture of a man arrested for murder the night before. The captain told me I had better lay off, but I insisted on getting in to talk with him anyhow. You should have seen him. His face looked like the whole squad had walked on it. The squad probably had. Now that picture would have been a nice exposé of police brutality, but I had no proof the man's face was the result of police brutality. The "questioning" officers, no doubt, would have sworn he had fallen against the table, or had tripped and slid on his face on the concrete floor. Furthermore, as a police reporter I would have been through. I would no longer have been the recipient of confidential information which I could not publish, but which would give me the background so necessary to the story I could publish. I did not call the photographer. As a matter of fact, the man told the officers where he had hidden the electric motor he was stealing from a pumphouse when the watchman caught him. He killed the watchman. Police brutality in this instance sent this man to his just doom.

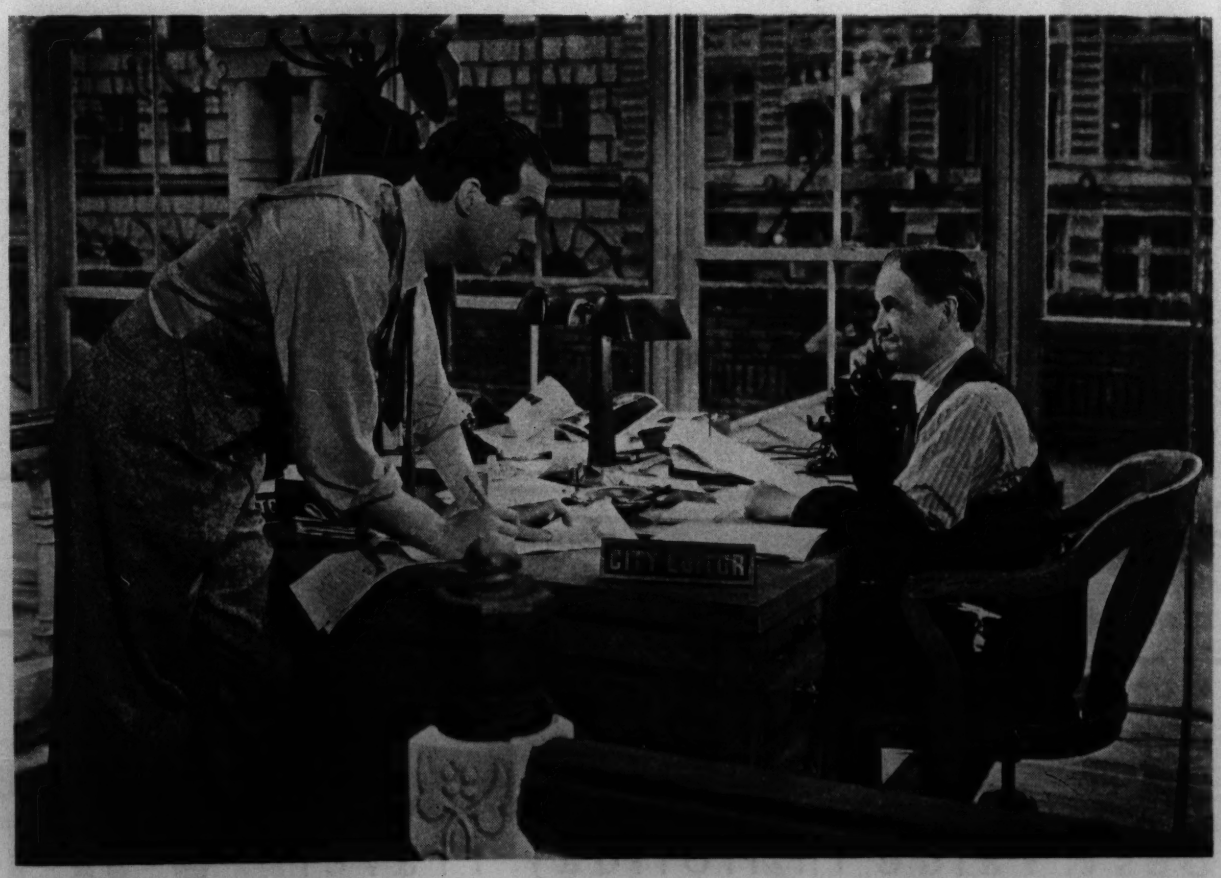
Police, however, are rarely so indiscreet as to work on any man's face. One of their pleasant habits is the tightening of handcuffs around the prisoner's wrists. Statutes have ruled out twisters and other instruments of a torturous nature, but they cannot rule out handcuffs. Handcuffs are a necessary part of any police officer's equipment, but at the same time they can be the cruellest instruments of torture devised by modern man. The handcuffs now used by police officers work on a ratchet device. To tighten the cuffs on a man's wrists, the officer merely presses on the cuffs. One click and they are tightened another notch. As a third degree instrument they are most effective. A few clicks and blood circulation stops. A few more and the cuffs begin to bite into the flesh. The wrists meanwhile swell. I have seen wrists which no more resembled human parts than a piece of hamburger. It is all done in the name of justice.

Is it any wonder the police reporter has bad dreams at night? Honest or crooked, hardened or sentimental, the average police reporter leads a tough life at his work. It is not grand, it is not romantic, neither can it be called adventurous. The police reporter is lucky if he can train his mind to consider it all in a day's work and nothing more.

Do not offer him your last drink of liquor when he comes off duty. He will grab it so quick you will think you dropped the bottle. Liquor gets him away from the things he saw, wrote about and did during the day; it offers him a flight from reality.

Yes, the police reporter drinks.

(*Copyright* 1938 *by Esquire-Coronet Inc.*)



'The same characteristics all City Editors have . . .' (*Exclusive. Paramount*)

FACTS

you should know about 'KODACHROME'

Apart from unrivalled clarity and beauty of colour rendering, "Kodachrome" is outstanding among colour films for speed and latitude.

The basic aperture recommended for bright conditions—between *f*11 and *f*8—is less than one stop larger than that recommended under similar conditions for Ciné-Kodak Panchromatic Film.

The film has remarkable latitude; over a range of half a stop on either side of the optimum the variation in colour rendering is no greater than the variation in individual preference. Even a variation of a full stop on either side of the optimum still produces results quite acceptable to all but the most critical. Such latitude is, moreover, ample for tackling subjects embracing not only a wide scale of colours, but also of degrees of *tone brightness*.

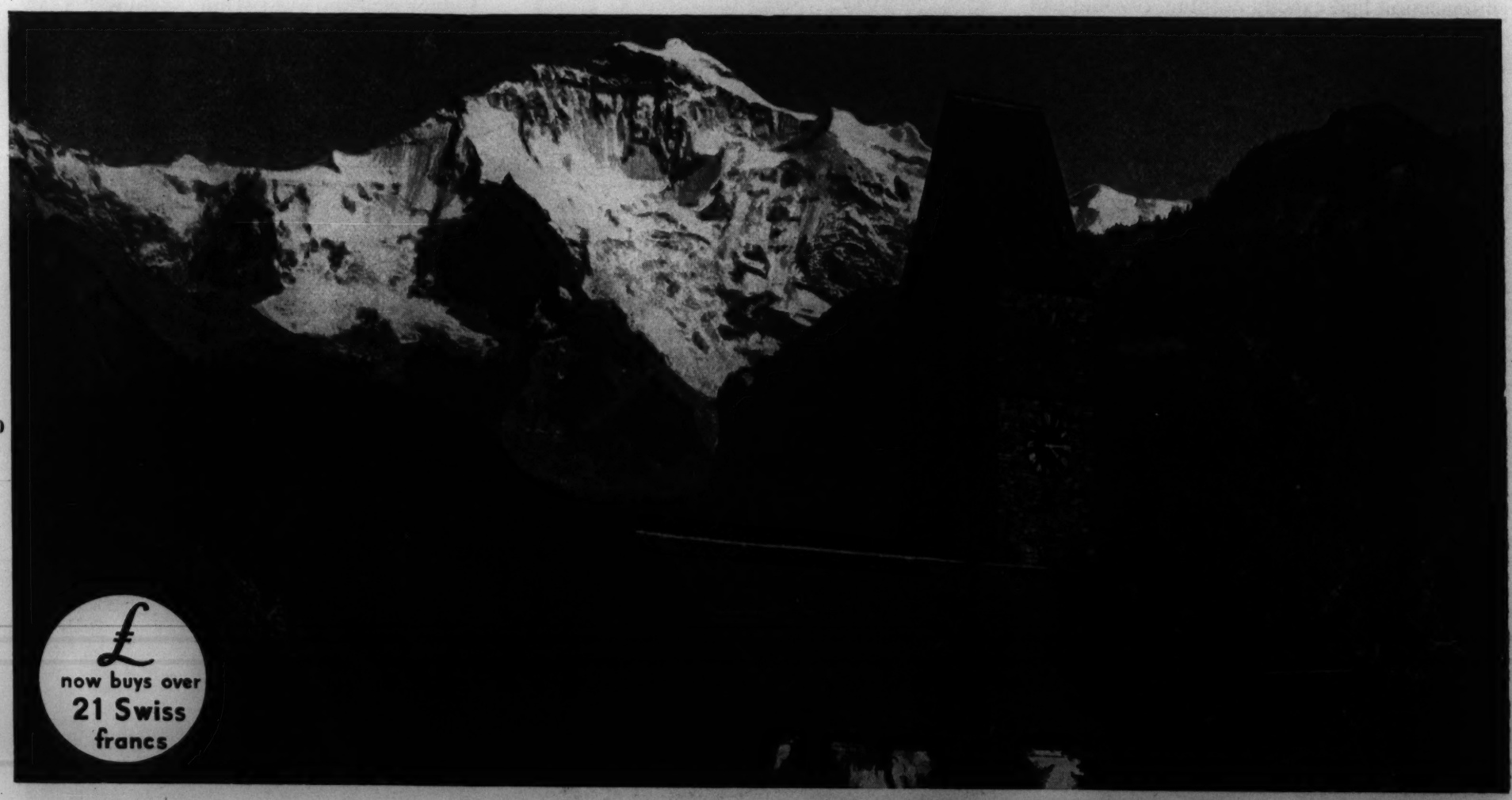
A further advantage of "Kodachrome" is its versatility and convenience in use. It is available in two types with emulsions corrected for daylight or Photoflood respectively, and with either type no filters or other attachments are necessary for true colour rendering, under the appropriate form of lighting.

16 mm. and 'Eight'—*Ciné*

35 mm.—*'Still'*

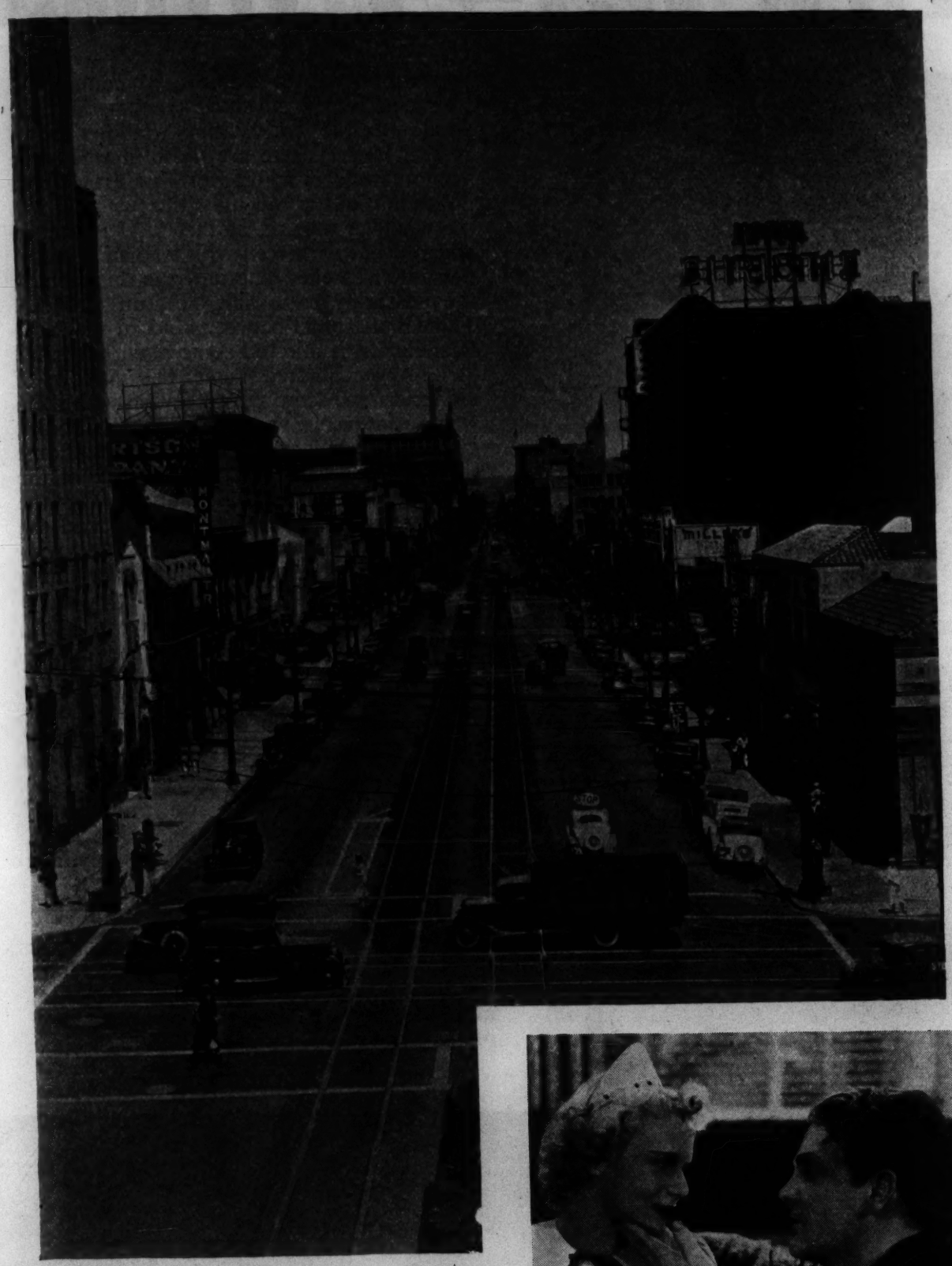
REGULAR for daylight **TYPE A** for Artificial Light

KODAK LTD., KODAK HOUSE, KINGSWAY, LONDON, W.C.2



Best Value in Holiday Travel—**SWITZERLAND**

INFORMATION : Swiss Railways & State Travel Bureau, 11-B Regent St., S.W.1, Railway Offices and Travel Agents



wind up every night at one or another of the night spots at two, three, four, and five in the morning. You go to all the class-conscious events of the town from plain parties to banquets for visiting writers from Europe. You get a little mixed-up too. On the one hand, you admire a man who earns three thousand dollars a week for his interest in the proletariat, and, on the other hand, you don't quite know. Is he really interested in the proletariat? If he isn't, what of it, so long as he keeps on donating money to the cause? And so on.

I once believed Hollywood was the one place in America that would pleasantly solve, under Capitalism—which I for one do not want to see substituted by Communism—the problem of keeping a good writer in money without taking away from him whatever it is he has that makes him good. I'm not so sure Hollywood can do such a thing.

Above: Hollywood Boulevard
Below: Another scene from 'Boy meets Girl'

Now, in Russia the Government takes care of its writers, keeping them in money and comfort. That is the sort of thing I, as a writer, would not care to tolerate. One does not like being patronised, even by a government. In Hollywood you allegedly *earn* your money. If it is three hundred dollars per week, you don't feel guilty because three hundred dollars is six or seven times as much as a steel worker earns for doing much harder work; you know a half dozen proletarian writers are earning twice as much, three times as much, and ten times as much. And more power to them, and to Communism too, for that matter. No hard feelings, just so it isn't patronage. Only you can't hang around as long as the proletarians because you don't like not being able to do something with a form you believe is too important to be wasted on tenth-raters and the public they have created. You're in favour of taking the same people and creating a new public. You don't care if the Communists don't care about creating a new public. That's their affair.

Hollywood can be of no use to the American writer (as a writer) because it doesn't need or employ writers. Those in Hollywood now called writers are not writers—they are : (1) idea men, (2) story discussers, (3) plot men, (4) dialogue writers, and (5) if they write at all, collaborators. The first necessity of the writer, privacy, is completely out of the question in Hollywood. By privacy I mean inward aloneness, without which I personally feel no good writing can ever be done.

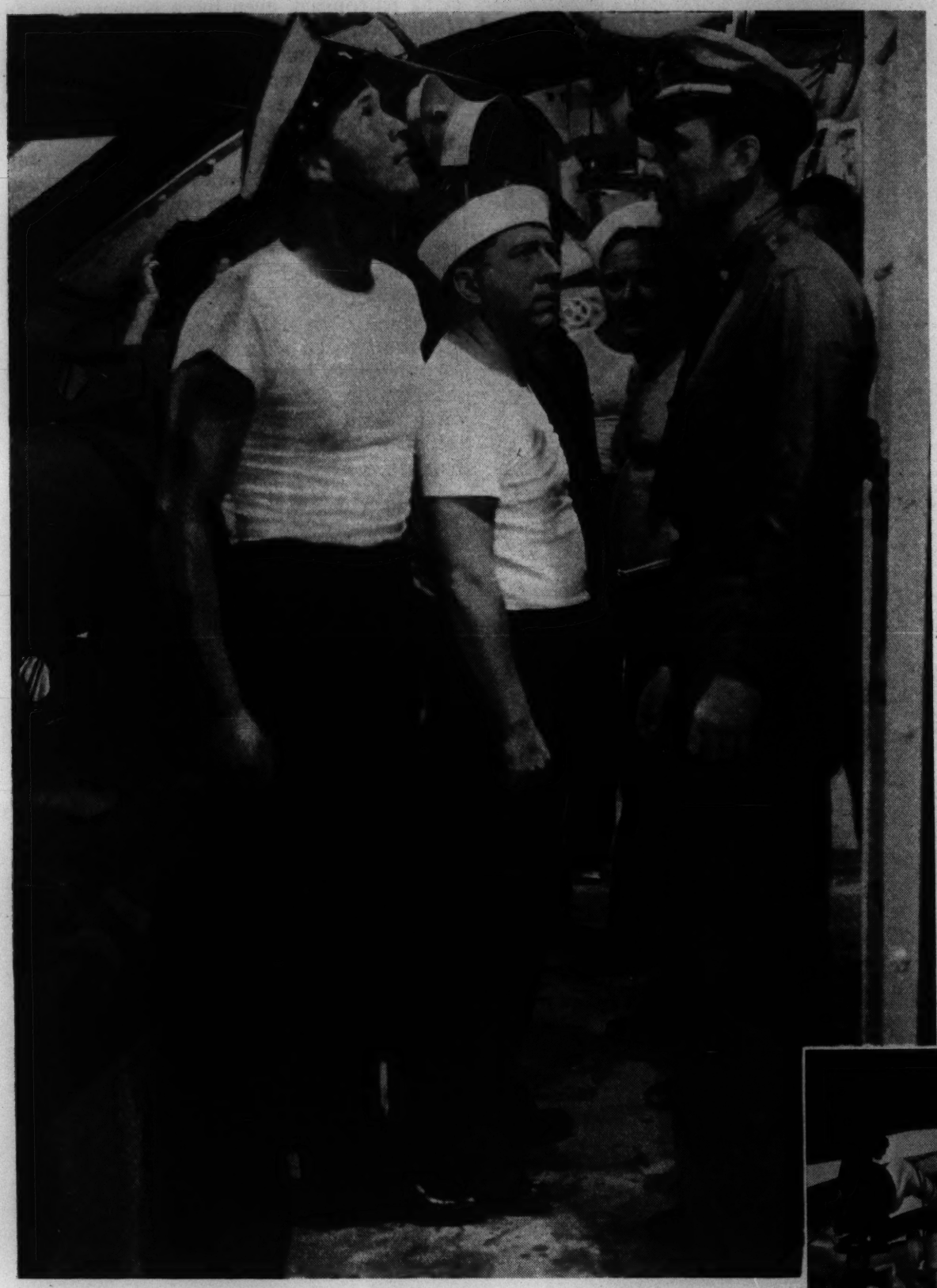
This does not mean, however, that Hollywood is a place to avoid. On the contrary, every American writer ought to visit the place, take a job at as large a salary as he can get, and hang around until he is fed up. If he never gets fed up, so much the better, or worse, depending on who's judging. If he gets fed up and doesn't dare leave town because he has got used to the money, again so much the better, one way or another.

The chances of doing anything integrated (from one man's point of view) are practically non-existent. You can't run the whole show because they don't do it that way. A picture which you see in fifty-five minutes and which at best is lousy is the result of long, hard work on the part of at least three hundred human beings, two of them sub-geniuses. An artist (as I call them) in order to produce a work of art, of any kind, in any form, *must* run the whole show. There isn't or aren't two ways about it.

For the fun of it, nevertheless, first-rate American writers should not hesitate now and then, or at least between books, to visit the bright little village. It isn't half bad. The people, at their worst, are only ambitious, competitive, sly and stupid. I am very fond of them.

This article first appeared in the weekly 'Time and Tide' to whom we are indebted for permission to reprint.

SUBMARINE D.1—A film of A



WHEN America created the commercial cinema she invented the biggest shop window in the world. Shop windows are of several kinds. There are those in which the vendor stuffs every conceivable article and hopes that out of this mass the customer will see what he wants. Another kind is that in which a hat is thrown with studied carelessness into a rarefied emptiness; in this vacuum the passer-by sees what he wants to see. There is also an in-between kind, in which the imagination is allowed some play, but is led along by a reiterated theme. The windows of the latter type score most heavily: with them we associate certain products—leather, books, guns, food and even certain values. Some shops have all three. On the façade of the building is dignified inspiration. On the corners are the in-betweens, and round the corner in the side streets are the junk windows crammed with anything and everything.

The American cinema industry similarly divides its products. It has a noble front of *Pasteurs*, *Dodsworths*, *Bounties*, *Zolas*, *Deeds* —its Class "A" pictures. These are the industry's prestige windows. In its second flight of films, its "B" pictures—*Border Flight*, *And Sudden Death*, *Arizona Raiders*, *Boulder Dam*, *Ceiling Zero*—the real products of America are dramatised. In its "C" pictures, made for the side streets, it puts its anything and everything.

Recently there arrived in this country a series of United States documentaries, representing a new departure in films for America, and following, for the greater part, the model of the British documentary films.

Above: Wayne Morris, Frank McHugh and George Brent

Right: Pat O'Brien talks it over with Frank McHugh

On opposite page: A scene from one of the most realistic and exciting sequences

America's Submarine Navy

Released in May, 'Submarine D.1' is a Warner Bros. Film directed by Lloyd Bacon and starring Pat O'Brien, Frank McHugh, George Brent and Wayne Morris.

★ ★

It was a surprise to many that hitherto America had had no exact parallel to the documentary. But we shouldn't have been surprised. America has been documenting her national life, articulating her national idiom, giving focus to her national loyalties, drinking her national Coca-Cola, shooting her civil enemies, glorifying her women, showing up her shysters, criticising her politicians, pointing her wit, sounding her accents, describing her railways, her automobiles, her hotels, her skyscrapers, her Yellow Cab Company, her monumental dams, her docks, documenting her history, explaining her geography, vending her hamburgers, flaunting her ice-boxes, gilding her palm beaches, giving a break to her bell-hops and dragging into the world's gaze her lumber men, her soldiers, her sailors, her airmen, her G-men, her divorce facilities and her superior bathtubs.

She has been doing this in her "B" pictures, and she has been showing these films in the public places of every civilised country. She has had little need of documentary. Here was her story, and a very striking one it has proved to be. Most of us in England know the skyline of New York though we may be ignorant of the main streets of Manchester; there are few of us who do not avail ourselves of the additions which the United States has made to the English language; not many of us would confuse the Chicago cop with a U.S. marine, though we would be very capable of such an error in Ostend. There are few of us who have not longed for the comfort of America's Trans-Continental Express on a journey to the ends of England, and most of us would be more at home in the Grand Central Station, New York, than in the Joint Station at Perth.

All this amazing conditioning of our thinking and our attitudes, has come through that great deluge of American "B" pictures. The latest and one of the very best is *Submarine* D.1. I now know more about the working of a U.S. submarine than I do about the London Underground.

It is not a glamorous film and it has no stars—only actors. What magnificently honest actors Pat O'Brien, George Brent and Frank McHugh are. As a trio of submarine going sailors, they are perfect. Pat O'Brien has always been safe from the degradations of stardom and Frank McHugh has too good a voice to coo, and has never shown that dangerous symptom, a profile. George Brent, for a little while, was on the danger line, but he has sailed clear—a little grey at the temples, but with his acting ability intact enough to take his place in the world of lumber men, newspapers and submarines. Glamour is represented in this world of dangerously living men only by the flash of Wayne Morris's teeth, but as he is represented as something of an outsider, glamour is quickly relegated to its proper level. As the victim of the flashing teeth, Doris Weston plays a woman, but not much.

THE story of *Submarine* D.1 is the story of the United States submarine navy, the story of science, of bravery, of invention, of resource, of pugnacity and of new worlds conquered. It is propaganda in the widest sense, not merely for the U.S. Navy, but for America, and for the qualities of American life and for the values which America holds most dear. Behind this articulation of the more intangible qualities of living in a U.S. service, there is the highly detailed description of the facts of American submarines. Three times the slight plot is held up while the immediate action and humour describes the working parts of a submarine, the technique of submerging and the methods of rescue. Each of these sequences is admirably informative without becoming dull. The toughness of Pat O'Brien and the humour of Frank McHugh keeps them very much alive.

There are few of our documentary directors who could claim for their films more lucid exposition than the sequence describing the rescue tower. Here is a film which these directors should see before next they expound on the place of the actor in realist films. It is one of the happiest fusions of realist material and studio actors. The subject was a gift to director Lloyd Bacon, for the submarine service offers legitimate catastrophe in every odd dive. But he has steadily kept the legitimacy of his drama to the fore. None of his actors suffers inwardly for the sins of others. The action is objectified in ships and seas and common mortality. The excitements are physical excitements, and the deaths the ends of brave men who go to the U.S. heaven for pioneers.

To this frontier of science and engineering Lloyd Bacon brings all the excitements which his predecessors brought to the plains and the deserts. Pat O'Brien is just as deft with an air compressor as W. S. Hart was with a six-shooter. George Brent shoots just as nifty a torpedo as Tom Mix ever did a .303.

Times change, and the shop window is altered to suit the passers-by, but still the same job is being brilliantly done. America is telling the world.

Thomas Baird

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Today's Cinema

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Today's Cinema

Behind the Scenes

Directed by EVELYN SPICE

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WAR DECLARED!

Kettner's Restaurant, Soho

BRITISH EXHIBITORS MOBILISE *against* HOLLYWOOD

W. F. N.'s Special Investigator reports the first stages of war in filmdom.

A SILENT civil war is raging in filmdom. Thrust and counter-thrust, determined offensive and stubborn defence is spreading the battle over a wide front.

On one side a cabal of film tycoons; on the other a quasi-democratic group which, in the manner of coalitions, is apt to be split by petty jealousies and ambitions.

The cabal is known as the K.R.S.—the Kinematograph Renters' Society. The opposition fights under the Popular Front banner of the C.E.A.—the Cinematograph Exhibitors' Association of Great Britain and Ireland.

The principal victim, however, will probably be the man in the street as usual. He certainly will be the sufferer if the cabal is victorious.

Propaganda and counter-propaganda have inevitably clouded the vital issues involved, and to understand these it is necessary to trace the history of film renting from the pre-talkie days.

But briefly the main issue is this—

Whether the average cinemagoer is to continue to see two big feature pictures for the price of his seat or be offered instead either one good and one indifferent picture, or, in some cases, two bad ones.

In the pre-talkie era all films were booked to cinemas at a flat price which varied according to the picture. The only exceptions to this rule were an occasional super-epic which was road-shown, i.e., shown in legitimate theatres or halls at fixed time performances.

The first talkies were, if only for their novelty value, in the super-epic class and could claim, and get, road-shown terms—that is, a percentage of the gross takings for the renter instead of a pre-arranged fixed rental. Once finally installed by the talkies, the percentage system was never repealed.

Costs of film hire rose, but the cinema prices to the public did not. In other words, the producer and distributor of the pictures got more of the gravy, the exhibitor less. Then with the success of the talking picture came the big cinema building boom of 1931–37 which resulted in there being three cinemas where before there was one.

Competition grew fierce, and bigger and better programmes had to be offered by rival cinemas to attract audiences. Two big features, and possibly a stage show in addition to a news-reel, cartoon and organ interlude became common.

In 1936, however, the K.R.S. decided that the public was getting too much for its money. It didn't say so in those terms. It declared that film programmes were too long. An attempt was made to limit programmes to 3¼ hours. It failed, within the K.R.S. itself because several members at that time owned theatres and opposed the move; and outside the K.R.S. because of technical difficulties due to stage shows and other such things.

So another idea was born—the present scheme to grade pictures into two classes, "A" and "B"—in theory the "A" films to be those of top entertainment value, and the "B" films the routine programme pictures.

Under this scheme, just being put into operation, all "A" films must be booked on a percentage basis, and two "A" pictures may not be played together in one programme. Nor could they be, as no cinema could afford to give away so great a proportion of its total takings. The public in other words must not be offered more than one top-class picture in one programme. "B" pictures, however, may be booked at a fixed flat rate.

But who is to decide which films are "A" and which "B"?

H.M. Government wisely decided, during their examination of the industry in connection with the Films Act, that it was impossible to classify films in terms of entertainment value. Not so the K.R.S. The movie moguls of that self-constituted trust decided that they could and would so grade them. To do this most satisfactorily they elected to meet weekly over the luncheon table at Kettner's restaurant, noted Soho theatrical rendezvous.

A tentative suggestion on the part of the C.E.A. that a joint committee of renters and exhibitors should be set up to sit as jury was brusquely rejected. The K.R.S. felt quite competent to assess impartially the merits of its own product.

BUT more startling developments were to come. The Film Star Chamber did not care for "nosey parker" curiosity as to their procedure. They decided not to disclose the result of their weekly inquests. As a result of

this remarkable decision an exhibitor is not to know whether a film is classed as "A" or "B" unless he takes the salesman's word for it. A highly dangerous procedure.

To avoid unwelcome competition the K.R.S. have decided, too, arbitrarily to arrange among themselves the release dates of their various productions. To the exhibitor this has the appearance of a Machiavellian attempt calculated to deprive him of good pictures at the very times that he most needs top-line attractions to lure his patrons from other pleasures. For, says he, it is extremely unlikely that the K.R.S. members will offer of their best in the summer off-season when the returns are less likely to be as comforting to the eye as in dank November or chilly January. And yet top-line attractions are necessary to the cinema in summer, for nothing less will successfully rival the multitudinous pleasures of seaside and rural pastimes.

True, reasons Mr. Exhibitor, there may be a supply of pictures rated as "A". But will they be really in the "A" class or merely seasonably promoted "B's"?

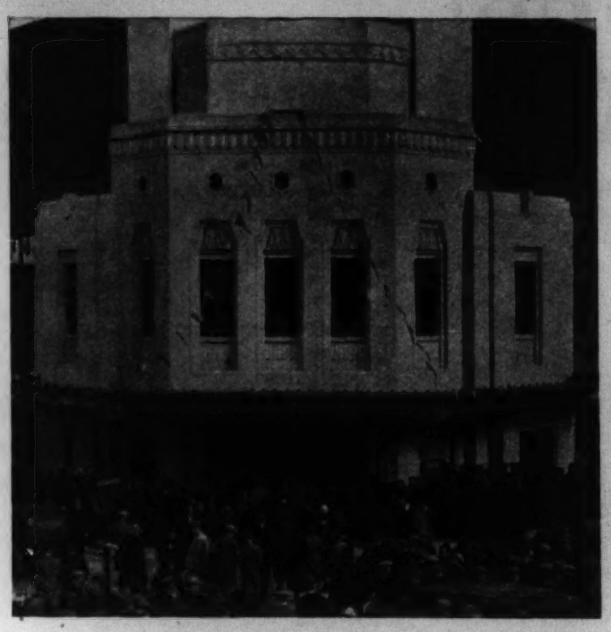
In the view of some cinema proprietors it may well be said later of the summer of 1938, "What so rare as an 'A' in June?"

But there is another and, to some minds, more serious aspect of this café conference arrangement of release dates which may merit the attention of those numerous M.P.'s who so stoutly took up cudgels not long since on behalf of British film production. Dare it be suggested that the British films on the renters' books will be offered for the off-season dates? As "A" pictures, of course.

"Look what we are doing for British production", the warm-hearted American magnates may boast. "Why we are grading British films in the 'A' class just like the best of our own."

Another development of the situation is the suggestion of a clearing house where all contracts would be vetted by the Film Star Chamber in order to make sure that two "A" films were not booked together.

And so, as in the modern practice, without a formal declaration of war, the hostilities have begun.



The K.R.S. barons maintain with conscientious conviction the Christian justice of their cause. They say:—

(1) Film programmes are too long and for the good of public and trade (exhibitors included) they must be shortened. One feature is enough for the English public, says the K.R.S.
(2) Two good features in one programme are uneconomic. The filmgoer is getting much too much for his money.
(3) The K.R.S. is well qualified to judge the standard of its own pictures for all parts of England.
(4) There is a shortage of films and this renders the two-feature programme policy impracticable.
(5) The cost of film production is rising, due partly to higher labour costs, and partly to an ever growing public demand for better and better entertainment.

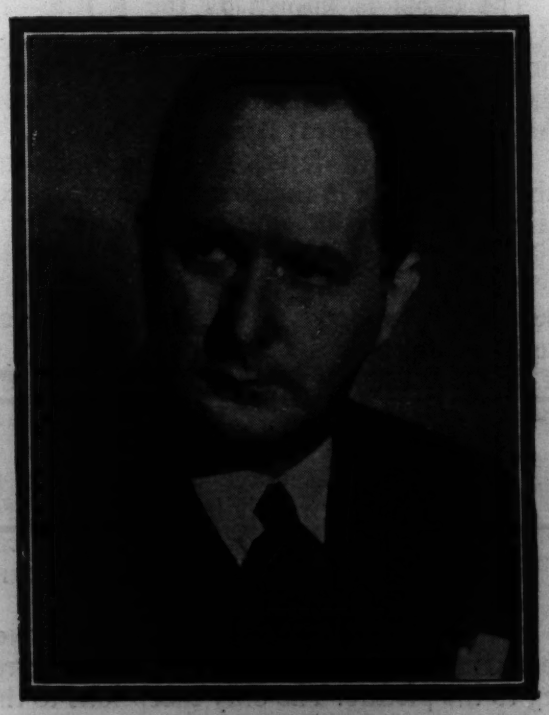
The coalition opposition under the C.E.A. banner, made up of countless independent exhibitors and supported by the big circuits, retorts:

(1) That the public are accustomed to and demand an adequate return for their money and will desert the cinemas if programmes fall off in entertainment value.
(2) That the renters cannot and will not be impartial in classifying their own films.
(3) That the grading policy at best means inflicting one bad picture on the public for every good one even supposing all the "A" films are good, which they are not.
(4) That only 1½% of the increased cost of picture production can be attributed to rising labour costs. 98½% is due to extravagance and the absurd fees paid to executives, stars, directors, writers and producers.
(5) That the K.R.S. is trying to make British filmgoers pay for Hollywood squandermania instead of reorganising its production on a sane basis.
(6) That, since American representatives are the backbone of the K.R.S., British films will not get a fair deal and will be placed in the "B" category except for off-season bookings.
(7) That the K.R.S. Americans here are practising monopolistic methods for which they would be indicted under United States laws.
(8) That there is no shortage of pictures that justifies these dictatorial methods.
(9) That the whole scheme is a device to squeeze the British market dry since it is to this country that Hollywood looks for its profits. Already £10,000,000 a year is taken out of the British market by the American producers.
(10) That film hire in America is more than 10% cheaper than it is in Great Britain.
(11) That the American public has killed a high pressure campaign staged by Hollywood to force single feature programmes.

THE public, who is in this case the body over which the rival forces are fighting, knows little or nothing of the tactics being pursued or of the leaders on each side. Let us throw some light on them.

The K.R.S., whose offices are by a significant coincidence in the old Bank of Italy premises in Old Compton Street, is made up of most of the film renters—and most of

Joe Friedman



D. E. Griffiths

Ralph Hanbury

them are American. The president, annually elected, is this year an Englishman—dapper David E. Griffiths, head of First National Pictures. But since the First National output is not the largest or, at least in the view of some, the most distinguished, he could be described as being rather in the position of a General Franco, a figurehead dominated by his foreign "volunteers."

Strong man of the caucus is Generalissimo Samuel Eckman, shrewd chief of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer in England. An American, he is an astute politician, a brilliant strategist. Next at the secret luncheon table are bull-necked Max Milder, also American, chief of Warner Brothers, First National's elder brother, and soft-spoken Murray Silverstone, United Artists' leader. An able negotiator from the United States, Tycoon Silverstone is a mild-mannered little fellow, a tactical genius with a velvet tongue. Vital, energetic, bespectacled Joseph Friedman of Columbia, is a useful addition to the alien brains trust, and last but not least of the American con-

Sam Eckman

A pioneer of British films, he controls the British International Studios at Elstree, the distributing agency, and the Associated British Picture Corporation which not only distributes films but owns over 400 theatres in this country. The third most notable absentee is fiercely independent veteran C. M. Woolf, whose film career was seemingly terminated with his resignation from the Gaumont-British Picture Corporation, but who burst into full bloom again when he formed and took charge of General Film Distributors who now not only handle the Gaumont-British output but also the long list of pictures produced by Universal in Hollywood. Other "non-playing" renters include Pathé and Butchers.

The disaffection of Messrs. Harley, Woolf and Maxwell, and the other aforementioned dissentients from the K.R.S. phalange knocks a serious breach in the otherwise iron front; for do not Twentieth Century Fox control all the Shirley Temple pictures, the new Gracie Fields series, the famous Darryl F. Zanuck

Murray Silverstone

Max Milder

J. C. Graham

tingent, judicial J. C. ("Daddy") Graham lends a benevolent air to the gathering. Of the Englishmen the most notable in forceful obedience to his U.S.A. chiefs is Ralph Hanbury, boss of R.K.O. Radio Pictures Ltd., who, aside from President Griffiths, is the only native-born son of British soil among the upper hierarchy, if we except paid Secretary Frank Hill, curly-headed, pince-nez wearer with the manner of a fussy but self-confident medico—the Signor Gayda or Mussolinic mouthpiece of the Kettner caucus.

These then comprise the war council of the renters, high command in their cigar-scented and be-waitered G.H.Q.

Cognoscenti will note some empty chairs around the luncheon table. Particularly surprising is the absence of gentlemanly Francis Harley, managing director of Twentieth Century Fox, whose company some years ago withdrew from the K.R.S., disputing their policy and methods. Also absent is Scots solicitor John Maxwell, a veritable film jack-of-all-trades, since he represents producing, renting and big-time exhibiting organisations.

musicals starring Sonja Henie, Alice Faye and that rising young fan idol Tyrone Power? While to Mr. C. M. Woolf falls the unquestionable pleasure of selling the Deanna Durbin epics which must be among the biggest money-spinners in the current market, as well as the Hitchcock pictures, the Jessie Matthews' musicals, the Will Hay comedies and many other first-class films. Then there are John Maxwell's productions with Charles Laughton as the ace star.

None of these films will be subject to the "A" and "B" grading unless the K.R.S. generously decides to label other people's properties as well as its own.

Spearhead of the mixed army holding the line against the attack of the K.R.S. is C.E.A. President Ken Nyman, and his able aides-de-camp, rotundly genial C.E.A. General Secretary W. R. Fuller, a rosy complexioned lawyer whose fame as a subtle negotiator has long been recognised throughout the trade, and the London and Home Counties Branch Secretary, Arthur Taylor.

But the shock troops are headed by dynamic Arthur Jarratt, Gaumont-British film-taster and executive; rebel general John Max-

well; young Sidney L. Bernstein, whose Granadas span the South; bluff Major Gale, untiring champion of the little exhibitor; Theo Fligelstone, who knows better than others the small theatre problem; ardent flat booker Teddy Hinge, vice-president of the C.E.A.; Yorkshire exhibitor Charlie Metcalfe, tireless fighter on the Films Bill; and Glasgow's plump twinkling wisecracker Alex B. King.

Their first counter offensive has been a manifesto calling on all exhibitors to book only "B" pictures—if any.

And the "if any" is no Grouchoism. For has not Generalissimo Eckman stated openly, and possibly cynically, that Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer will not make any "B" pictures? Thus, with sagacious precautionary forethought, has Mr. Eckman defined the entertainment value of all his studio's forthcoming productions including those on which work has not yet been started.

Maestro Samuel Goldwyn, recent visitor here and power in United Artists, while whole-heartedly favouring the K.R.S. policy, was more disarming than colleague Eckman on the question of "B" pictures. In answer to a Press probe he cracked back, "There is no need to worry about the supply of 'B' pictures. Why, £200,000 is often expended to make an 'A' picture and it turns out to be a 'B'." But he neglected to say whether the K.R.S. in London would ever class a £200,000 production as a "B" picture even if the public went further and deemed it "B.A".

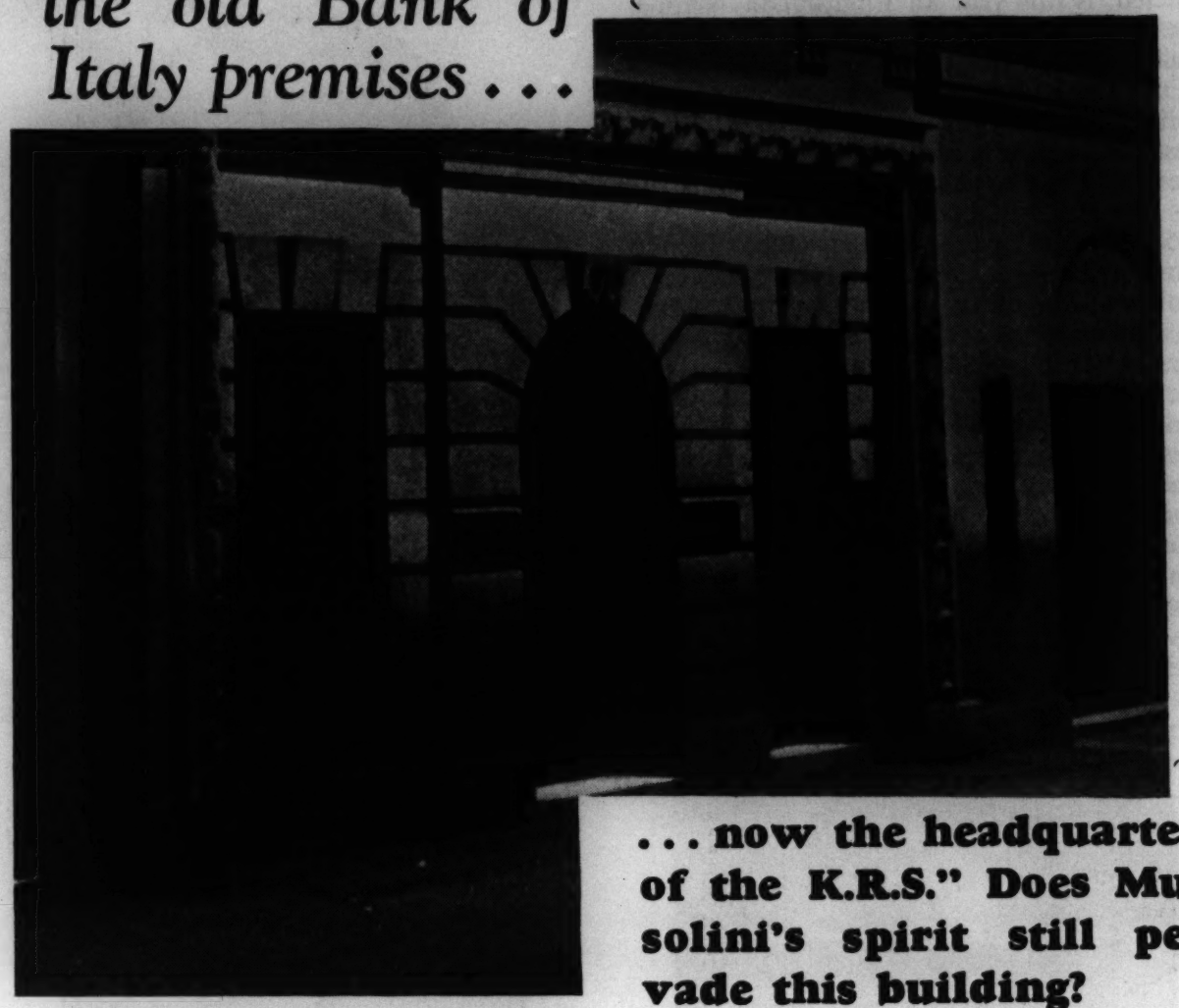
It is indeed the very fact that £200,000 is nowadays by no means an unusual total of expenditure on a picture that is one of the principal complaints of the exhibitors who feel that the results do not always justify the spending of so astronomic a sum. Critics of Hollywood maintain that these colossal costs are primarily the producers' fault, for those great men would rather pay exorbitant sums to borrow established stars, writers and directors than go to the trouble of developing new talent. In the end, it is argued, inter-company rivalry for the services of top-liners benefits nobody—not even the people for whose services there is so great a demand—for in most cases the person is under contract to one firm for a comparatively low figure and his employer pockets the difference between this and the price he gets from the borrower. Moreover, in the scramble all sense of proportion is lost and fees rise away beyond justifiable proportions.

WE have been shown that there are gaps in the K.R.S. ranks. But do not let it be thought that the C.E.A. forces are not also subject to disarray. The big Odeon circuit, which is closely associated with United Artists, might be described as maintaining an attitude of benevolent neutrality, and there is always a danger of some of the C.E.A. branches or individual members adopting a certain rugged individuality dictated, perhaps, for reasons of personal rivalry or gain.

And so the unseen battle rages back and forth.

The American film barons comfortably separated by the Atlantic ocean from the overwatchfulness of their superiors in New York and California, and encouraged by past successes against disunited opposition, have developed a taste for political intrigue which, in the view of some, accords ill with their position as guests of the country in which they conduct their business.

"the old Bank of Italy premises . . .



. . . now the headquarters of the K.R.S." Does Mussolini's spirit still pervade this building?

They feel repletely secure around their festive luncheon table. They can, not unnaturally, see no serious obstacle to their victorious and remunerative advance, and the possibility of further loot appears to them gloriously limitless. After all £10,000,000 a year in a business whose turnover is many times this figure appears, comparatively, a mere pittance to send back to America annually, especially when there seems to be so much more to be got for the gentle application of a little additional pressure. Besides, who is to question their tactics? Least of all, surely, their superiors abroad who will derive the benefit.

ONLY a professional astrologer would dare to prognosticate the outcome of the clash. On paper, at least, a small group of determined men would seem to be in a more favourable position than a large and widespread association many of whose members are direct business rivals. Past history, too, seems to favour the K.R.S. for it has emerged victorious before from skirmishes with the C.E.A.

On the other hand the exhibitors on this occasion have really got their dander up and may be expected to show much more fighting spirit than has characterised them in past engagements. Moreover, because they so happily find themselves in the position of champions of the public's entertainment, they have a heaven-sent platform plank.

Besides the exhibitors do on this occasion really seem to be fighting for their lives. The new grading scheme does not stop short at the weekly programme. It is designed to obtain percentage rates for Sunday bookings, second and third run showings, and children's matinees, all of which previously fell within the range of fixed price bookings.

The exhibitor sees himself being butchered to make a Hollywood holiday and he is no willing sacrifice. Compromise appears an impossibility—at least at this stage. The struggle has all the earmarks of turning into a fight to the death. It really all depends on whether the exhibitors can really unite or not.

If they can agree then it seems probable that the renters will be forced to climb down. If they fail to do so—*Vae Victis.*

The little men and women whose modest bobs pay for the entire industry are unaware of the struggle that is being so silently and yet so bitterly fought out in their very midst, and in any case they will not be deeply interested. But when they wake up the rape of their entertainment may be a *fait accompli* and they will have to grin and bear it. The customer is always wrong.

If the cinemagoer, like the exhibitor, could organise his forces and bring the matter to the attention of Parliament . . . but the K.R.S. would dismiss this unpleasant unreality for the horrid nightmare that it is. No dictators worthy of the name would consider even momentarily such an absurd suggestion.

No, the exhibitors will have to fight the public's battle as well as their own. The public should wish them luck.

FILMS —

Robert Flaherty WANTS TO SEE AGAIN

WHAT films would I like to see again? Time is very hard on films, so how many would survive another showing I cannot tell, but anyway here is the list.

Birth of a Nation, because it revealed the hitherto undreamed of potentialities of the cinema.

Tol'able David—one of the most sincere pictures ever made in Hollywood.

There is also *Stark Love* by Carl Brown, a Hollywood cameraman who went into the foot hills of Tennessee and made the first dramatic film with real characters I can remember—a forerunner to the grand picture Michael Powell has recently made in the Shetlands (*Edge of the World*).

None of Hollywood's big spectacle pictures do I remember very well, but Von Sternberg's *Underworld* and his best film, *The Case of Lena Smith*, are outstanding. I can also add to the Hollywood list almost every film Raymond Griffith ever made, Chaplin's pictures, of course, particularly his *Gold Rush* and also a certain picture by Lubitsch called *Kiss Me Again*.

More recent pictures from Hollywood are the *Three Cornered Moon*, the *Thin Man*, *Theodora Goes Wild*, *Mr. Deeds Goes To Town*, and *Dodsworth*.

Among the Russian pictures are *Potemkin* and Dovzhenko's *Earth*, which is the best picture I have ever seen.

Among the German films, *Caligari*, of course, comes first. There is also *The Last Laugh* and certain of the old Ufa documentaries, like the "Timber" film.

Of the French films there are René Clair's *Under the Roofs of Paris*, and Feyder's *Crainquebille*, and the more recent and wonderful *La Maternelle*.

Of the British dramatic films Hitchcock's *Blackmail* is memorable. And another more memorable still which I happened to see in India: *Turn of the Tide*. Of the recent British dramatic pictures, *Farewell Again* is the best.

But Michael Powell's *Edge of the World*, because it was made with real people and incorporated so wonderfully the character of the country in which it was taken, will be remembered after the other British dramatic films are forgotten.

Many of the British documentary films made during the past two years I have not yet seen, but of the older ones those I most want to see again are *Granton Trawler*, which had more spume in it than any picture of the sea, *Drifters*, and also one of the best films ever made anywhere at any time, *Night Mail*.

As I said before there are many good documentary films I have not yet seen, but the years won't affect them as it does the dramatic films, so there still is plenty of time.

"Farewell Again"

"Tol'able David"

Above:
"La Maternelle"
Left:
"Granton Trawler"

A YANK at OXFORD

Reviewed by John Grierson

A *YANK at Oxford* has been presented as an important picture. It has been presented with full benefit of what they call a "diplomatic premiere", and the dignitaries of London, with that blind appetite for free shows that so amuses the foreigners, turned out in full force. If *A Yank at Oxford* had been a call to national unity in Westminster Hall, it could not have been so handsomely received. One's first reaction is to wonder how so trifling a work can command the great, for it is like catching the Cabinet with its feet up, deep in the adventures of Augustus D'Arcy of the "Green 'Un". But perhaps there is more in this than meets the eye. I heard someone not without responsibility say he thought *A Yank at Oxford* a huge contribution to Anglo-American friendship, and, at the present time, a vital one. That, of course, would explain everything.

I cannot pretend I did not like the film. The Yank who goes to Oxford, thinking he will show the old place a step or two, is caught in the toils of Oxford's traditions, and a measure of English diffidence is added to his American vitality to make him something, if not all, of an English gentleman. That is the story, and it runs easily and warmly, and one forgets that the alcohol going to one's head is strictly synthetic. On examination, it is, of course, the old ackamarackus with a vengeance, and remembering it in colder blood, I never saw in all my born life such a funny University or such a footling lot of students. Everyone is so desperately serious about winning things, and not being cads, and shaking hands as between white men, and cutting you dead, and, in the last resort, giving up all for one's friend, that I would not be surprised at all if America mistook Oxford for a host of golden daffodils.

On the other hand, and in spite of this spurious schoolboy nonsense, the film goes with a lick, the dialogue is witty and good, and the acting has streaks of real excellence. This is particularly the case with C. V. France's playing of an old and somewhat dithery don, and Vivien Leigh's account of a vamp in a bookshop. Robert Taylor is so much better than his publicity men allow that he ought to sue them for damages. With a whale of a part, he takes it like his own 440, flying. He not only outruns, outrows, outwisecracks and out-sacrifices his lesser brethren of England, but he also—and it makes me a trifle suspicious about Anglo-American friendship—is given every opportunity to out-act them.

M.G.M. has been very skilful about the whole affair. To give Robert Taylor the associated value of winning the Oxford–Cambridge 440, stroking the Oxford boat to victory, and then licking the limeys in everything else, is nice work in star building.

With all this in my mind, I begin to doubt if *A Yank at Oxford* is such terrific propaganda for England after all. There were moments in the film when the leaves of England stirred, and the sun came out, and Oxford's bells and Magdalen's choristers sounded very sweet, and time stood still a little in the fields of England. On each occasion, old and hardened and suspect of original sin as I am, I sat up in my seat, and waited for the English film we were promised to happen. I thought perhaps that where so much age and so much youth were mingled, M.G.M. could not fail to achieve an occasional thin wisp of poetry. But the gaudy chariot of stardom rolled on relentlessly, throwing out its tinkling pennies of action and wisecrack, and a win for Robert Taylor every minute. In spite of all the promise, it is like all the rest of them. The damned thing has no roots, and what is the use of saying otherwise? Will those who see it remember the glimpses of reality, or the slabs of fiction: the choristers, or the wisecracks? Is there enough of England in the glimpses to stir the heart, or is it just the same old story of the magnificent young man and the magnificent young woman, with Oxford providing a decorative background? If so rootless, will the Anglo-American friendship it brings mean anything in a twelvemonth?

But you need not trouble to answer. The cinema does not live on nice distinctions, and M.G.M. or any other film company would not bother, anyway. The real answer I got from a big exhibitor. "I know it's good", he said, "but the worst of it is that Sam Eckman, the salesman, also knows it is good, and what with the diplomatic premiere, he won't take less than 50 per cent". If that price were ever justifiable, I would say, on balance, that M.G.M. had deserved it. The film is a good rollicking piece of filmcraft, and does no one any harm. If it pretends so much to be an epic of England, God save us, who are we to debag it? Oxford has been staring us in the face all the days of movies, and we have not had the wit to use it so well, much less better. I say 'floreant' to Ben Goetz, Sam Eckman and Louis B. Mayer. They will make a packet, and Robert Taylor is a greater gold mine than ever.

FRED ASTAIRE at BLANDINGS CASTLE

Basil Wright reviews 'The Drum', 'A Damsel in Distress' and 'Bluebeard's Eighth Wife'.

How it is typical of us to allow folk from far countries to sing our praises! For a long time now the Americans have devoted a large part of their Hollywood product to cracking us up as White Men and stressing the importance of the Empire. One would like to think that the first inspiration of *The Drum* came to the Korda brothers, not from Mason via Kipling, but from someone like Yankee Daniel Webster, who described so well the theme on which they have built a film. "A power to which, for purposes of foreign conquest and subjugation, Rome in the height of her glory is not to be compared—a power which has dotted over the surface of the whole globe with her possessions and military posts, whose morning drum-beat, following the sun, and keeping company with the hours, circles the earth with one continuous and unbroken strain of the martial airs of England."

Oh boy—is that paragraph a grand subject for technicolour, or is it not? C. Aubrey Smith isn't available, unfortunately—but otherwise the atmosphere of *Bengal Lancer* has been re-created to perfection. The white men are ever so white, and the coloured men are for the most part cads—even going so far as to use machine-guns, which simply is not done. The cockneys in kilts have that quaint humour which we all love so much in our Tommies, and the moustachios of the sergeant-major are waxed most furiously.

And the officers—with what grace do they wear their mess uniforms, and with what dignity do they ignore the pipers who pipe in an invisible haggis after dinner! And let us not forget the solitary memsahib, singing blues at her minipiano in the outermost outpost of the North West Frontier, sinister Tokot itself. Tokot, ruled over by Raymond Massey who has usurped the throne from poor little Sabu—already disconsolate enough without his elephant, and only half consoled by a white charger which indeed he rides with a spirit equal to its own. Tokot, where the feast and the dancing girls are but a mask for foulest treachery. Tokot, where the heads of faithful retainers are thrown in through the drawing-room window of the Residency. Tokot, where—well anyway, go and see for yourself.

Hand on heart, I do think *The Drum* is a very silly film; but I also admire its production values enormously. Much of it is exterior, and the most practised eye cannot distinguish between North Wales, Denham, and India itself. The colour is excellent, and so reguar in tone that the cutting is gratifyingly slick and without clashes. And the direction and acting, within their own melodramatic limits, are a great deal better than previous efforts from the same stables. But I would like, as a penny postscript, to suggest that the facts and problems of the Empire are in themselves sufficiently important, exciting, and dramatic to warrant attention from film producers, and that from the point of view of prestige a film on more practical lines would be a more worthy way of spending the money than this pretty extravagant lump-in-throat fantasia on a threadbare and melodramatic theme.

TRUE devotees of the Maestro Wodehouse will agree that no successful translation of the Jeeves-Wooster-Blandings epics into stage or screen terms has yet been achieved. *A Damsel in Distress* comes nearer than most, chiefly because the original story has not been altered; but the quicksilver touch of the novel is still missing, despite Constance Collier's accurate rendering of the Aunt, and Harry Watson's inspired page-boy (how I wish they had interpolated the famous reading from Tennyson's *Maud*—it was made for Master Watson). Moreover, unlike the joyous books of the Master, the film takes far too long to get going; a little drastic cutting in the first three reels would be a big improvement. But the stars will no longer be denied; this is a Fred Astaire film.

Undismayed by the absence of Ginger Rogers, he puts up an original virtuoso act with a large jazz drummer's outfit as the victim of his mercurial toes, teams with Burns and Allen for several comedy dances, and takes Joan Fontaine for a terpsichorean stroll through the ornamental grounds of Totleigh Castle. The man has a natural grace of movement; his nonchalant stroll across the set is as satisfactorily timed as his most complicated routines. His engaging face, a shade in the style of Stan Laurel, radiates a bonhomie which would make the fortune of a less accomplished actor. Like a fresh-caught eel, he slithers happily through the minor musical-comedy complications of the story, only retiring now and then to allow Gracie Allen to swing dumbness into dizzy splendour, while Reginald Gardiner gives a paralysing performance as a perfect servant trying (unsuccessfully) to choke back an impulse to render tenor arias from Italian opera.

It is a pity that the best sequence of the film comes in the middle instead of the end. Everything is a shade anticlimactic after the Fun Fair scene, when the Oompah makes a grand reappearance on a giant revolving floor, and Astaire, Burns, and Allen become *plus surréalistique que les surréalistes* in a hotcha-dance along the distorting mirrors. This sequence is pure Jabberwocky, and beautifully shot and cut. But why must Hollywood always insist on perpetuating the fog-myth? Even among the evening glades Astaire twinkles his feet in a kind of portable mist-cloud, which follows him round like the fluctuating ghost of a St. Bernard. Anyhow, it gives the cameraman a chance for some pretty effects. The music is by Gershwin, and might be better.

LUBITSCH has hit the trail again after his regrettable détour into the Death Valley of *Angel* and *Desire*. His new film has all the elements proper to his art, the elements of *So This is Paris* and the *Marriage Circle*. He has hugged Gary Cooper and Claudette Colbert to his capacious bosom, and invested them with his own insignia of wit to such purpose that we can even accept Cooper as a tough business magnate who always makes a corner in highspeed marriage and divorce. The story is merely about his eighth attempt in that market, during which Colbert knocks him silly and finally re-marries him with the help of a strait waistcoat. Not that the story matters very much; it depends on Lubitsch gags, and Lubitsch embellishments, to say nothing of the fact that Lubitsch is one of the few people who really know about film direction.

Once you accept the lavishing of such abilities on a worthless bit of French-farcery, there is little to complain about and a great deal to enjoy. Never has the machinery of escapism been so cunningly oiled. We are allowed a good deal of globe-trotting, enough daring moments to make us feel mischievous but not naughty, and a whole string of elaborate jokes of the squib variety, with the final pop delayed to the point where one no longer expects it.

True, there are points where wit vanishes, and with it taste—and I for one found some of the mental-home scenes heavy and humourless; but the opening sequence of the film is impeccable—a theme with variations. The theme, an attempt to buy the top portion only of a pyjama suit, is announced majestically and imposingly, and the variations elaborately shower arpeggios and grace notes, with a witty discord occasionally breaking through, until the virtuosity of the whole piece becomes almost hypnotic.

The only real regret about Lubitsch—one which the *argumentum ad box office* can easily counter—is that he has modified his satirical abilities so much, both in terms of technique and intellectual approach, that the sting, if not removed, is virtually unnoticeable.

Perhaps *Bluebeard's Eighth Wife* could have been a masterpiece had he been less anxious not to cause us the least discomfort. But why complain about a really comfortable divan?

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The MONTH'S RELEASES

THE releases which will attract most attention this month are *The Last Gangster*, starring Edward G. Robinson, and *Fight for Your Lady*, with Jack Oakie in the lead. Whether or not they mean it to be the last of the gangster cycle, M.G.M. have turned out a very polished film in *The Last Gangster*. Edward G. Robinson plays Krozac, a Slav-born racketeer sent to Alcatraz for a term of ten years. While there, his wife learns his true character and goes away with their child, to marry a respectable citizen. On his release, Krozac's former gang pick him up and try to sweat out of him the whereabouts of a tin box he has hidden before serving his sentence. He won't tell, so they kidnap his child and torture him before his eyes. That breaks Krozac and he tells. Freed, he takes the boy home to his former wife, and leaves him there in what he knows to be better hands. On his way out, he is killed, after a grim gun-fight, by an old enemy. Edward G. Robinson plays Krozac convincingly, with Rose Stradner and James Stewart in support.

Fight for Your Lady is performed by a capable cast headed by Jack Oakie, Ida

Mickey Rooney

Lupino and John Boles. Smart dialogue, direction full of comedy touches, and spontaneous acting make this the best and most entertaining release of the month. This film will most likely be shown as a second feature, but should not be missed on that account.

The Western of the month is *Thunder Trail*, and one of those rarities, a well-made one. Story good, and action plentiful, with direction well above the normal for Westerns. Charles Bickford has the heavy role, and is well supported by Gilbert Roland and Marsha Hunt. This Western, though made of the usual ingredients, is likely to appeal as much to adults as to children.

Paramount's colour version of Robert Louis Stevenson's *Ebb Tide* relies far too much on its colour and its striking backgrounds to be really satisfactory. Oscar Homolka is perhaps too deliberate in his performance and slows the film down, but Barry Fitzgerald, late of the Abbey Theatre, almost runs away with the picture as a conniving cockney seaman. The film lacks pace, and even Lloyd Nolan's excellent piece of acting as a psychopathic villain scarcely atones for this slowness. *Thoroughbreds Don't Cry* is an exposure of racketeering in the racing world played as a comedy farce. Several young actors—Mickey Rooney and Judy Garland amongst them—are starred with C. Aubrey Smith in a story of the ups and downs experienced in trying to win a big handicap at Santa Anita. *Perfect Specimen* is a crazy comedy with Errol Flynn, Joan Blondell, Hugh Herbert and Edward Everett Horton. Story is of a rich, well-brought-up young man, who leaves a life of luxury to find love and amusement amongst ordinary people. This is not a social problem film but a passably good comedy with good performances by the stars.

Grace Moore fans will know what to expect from *I'll Take Romance* which follows the old formula. The film tells of an American in Buenos Aires who chases an opera singer round the world because she will not fulfil her contract. More grand opera than usual, with Melvyn Douglas and Stewart Erwin in charge of the comedy.

Wells Fargo, Paramount's successor to *The Plainsman* is not by any means so entertaining or well-made as its predecessor. Supposedly a big outdoor spectacle, the majority of the film consists of interiors and from this angle it definitely disappoints. The story traces the history of the Wells Fargo Express Co., which ran mail across the North American Continent. Joel McCrea plays the lead, with Frances Dee as his wife, in this Frank Lloyd production. Another "outdoor" film is *The Barrier*. This is the third edition of Rex Beach's story of a man who kidnaps the daughter of a woman he once loved and brings her up to believe she is a half-breed Indian. The chief assets of the film lie in the scenic backgrounds of Mount Baker National Park and Leo Carrillo, who, luckily, has lots to do and say.

Alcatraz Island is a film about America's penal settlement. Every effort has obviously been made to make the background of prison life as authentic as possible, and from this point of view the film is praiseworthy. In the process, however, the story has been neglected.

From the British studios comes Alfred Hitchcock's newest *Young and Innocent*, starring Nova Pilbeam and Derrick de Marney. Rather naïve, the film contains enough of those subtle tricks which mark Hitchcock's films. The story concerns an unsophisticated young country girl, who gets involved with a young man falsely accused of murder, and her attempts to prove his innocence.

Dope, poison, stabbing knives, poisoned arrows, invisible writing, black cloaks, venomous snakes, a hot-headed Tinker, a sleepy Pedro, a dashing Sexton Blake, a beautiful foreign agent, an arch-criminal, an international gang, fire, false floors, trap doors, no love stuff, and a last-minute rescue from a death, than which there is nothing worse, are some of the ingredients of *Sexton Blake and the Hooded Terror*. If you don't like it, then you must be sophisticated. If this is not the stuff that screams are made on, then we are terribly off-centre. Not that we would mind that, for we always thought that Sexton Blake was the goods, and we would walk miles to hear Tod Slaughter.

MAY RELEASES

The Last Gangster (M.G.M.) * *
DIRECTOR: Edward Ludwig
STARRING: Edward G. Robinson
James Stewart
Rose Stradner
(Reviewed WFN January)

Man Proof (M.G.M.)
DIRECTOR: Richard Thorpe
STARRING: Myrna Loy
Franchot Tone
Rosalind Russell
Walter Pidgeon
(Reviewed WFN March)

Young and Innocent (Gaumont-British)
DIRECTOR: Alfred Hitchcock
STARRING: Nova Pilbeam
Derrick de Marney
(Reviewed WFN March)

Ebb-Tide (Paramount)
DIRECTOR: James Hogan
STARRING: Oscar Homolka
Ray Milland
Barry Fitzgerald
Lloyd Nolan
Frances Farmer
(Reviewed WFN December)

Wells Fargo (Paramount)
DIRECTOR: Frank Lloyd
STARRING: Joel McCrea
Bob Burns
Frances Dee
(Reviewed WFN February)

Thunder Trail (Paramount) *
DIRECTOR: Charles Barton
STARRING: Charles Bickford

The Perfect Specimen (First National) *
DIRECTOR: Michael Curtiz
STARRING: Errol Flynn
Joan Blondell
(Reviewed WFN February)

Submarine D-1 (Warner)
DIRECTOR: Lloyd Bacon
STARRING: Pat O'Brien
George Brent
Wayne Morris
Doris Weston

Alcatraz Island (Warner)
DIRECTOR: William McGann
STARRING: John Litel
Ann Sheridan

Charlie Chan at Monte Carlo (20th Cent. Fox)
DIRECTOR: Eugene Ford
STARRING: Warner Oland

Fight for Your Lady (R.K.O. Radio) *
DIRECTOR: Ben Stoloff
STARRING: John Boles
Jack Oakie

REVIEW OF REVIEWS

Edited by

H. E. BLYTH

W.F.N. Selection.

The Front Page	* * *
A Yank at Oxford	*
Jezebel	*
Le Roi S'amuse	*

Other Films covered in this issue:

The Drum

Bluebeard's Eighth Wife (stars reserved)

A Damsel in Distress

The Adventures of Marco Polo (stars reserved)

Mad About Music

Bank Holiday

Bringing Up Baby

La Tendre Ennemie

Nina Petrovna

Generals Without Buttons

A Yank at Oxford

(Jack Conway—Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer)

Robert Taylor, Griffith Jones, Maureen O'Sullivan, Vivien Leigh.

In about thirty years' time, when Robert Taylor is playing Lionel Barrymore parts, I fancy he will look back on his trip to England as a memorable milestone in his career.

Not because of the multitudes that met him at Waterloo. Nor the girls who fought for his discarded cigarette stubs. But because in *A Yank at Oxford* he made his best film up to that time, proved that a Hollywood star could make a British film and gain, rather than lose, "face", and proved himself beyond the final doubt an accomplished actor.

Taking up that last point first, this is the first time in his career Taylor's part has been more important, in acting requirements, than his mere (what a word about such a creature!) physical presence. The eight writers credited with participation have not evolved a great story, but they have given a simple one a full measure of incident, plausibility, wit, and that attractive warmth which for want of a better word we must call humanity.

Their most daring feat is to make the character played by the god-like Taylor partly unsympathetic. For a time, indeed, he is what young Oxford might well call a cad. He sees a fellow student in disgrace and danger of ruin for something he did not do, while Taylor, the culprit, keeps silence on his guilty secret. The situation arises through Taylor, a bombastic American athlete, coming to Oxford and throwing his weight about.

He learns painfully that Oxford is not impressed. He learns that to win the race is not so important as to win it sportingly. He learns a lot. But that sounds far too "Tom Brown's Schooldays" to give any real idea of the picture's quality.

Where it most brilliantly succeeds is in manipulating the balance so that Britain will laugh at America, America at Britain, and everybody will emerge happy and with national honour unbesmirched.

If there was any deliberate intention of emphasising the "masculinity" of Taylor's personality it has been done with discretion. His admirable physique enables him to play the athletic virtuoso with easy conviction. He runs with style; he rows as though he might well stroke a winning Boat-race crew. Yet with all this athleticism the picture does not fall into the trap of being aggressively hearty. In the same way, there is sentiment about Oxford itself, but again not laid on so that it becomes maudlin (or should I spell it Magdalen in this context?).

To set opposite Taylor in this international combat the producers could not have found a better man than Griffith Jones. The best praise Taylor could have is that he stands up to and gives as good as he gets from this equally handsome, more experienced young English actor. Maureen O'Sullivan is the girl who revolts against, but eventually surrenders to, the charm behind the bombast, and Vivien Leigh gives by far the best screen performance as the kittenish, pouting college flirt with a dull husband in the background. Lesser parts are admirably played by Edmund Gwenn, Peter Croft, Robert Coote, C. V. France and Edward Rigby.

Everybody who took part in this anxious venture—for Metro-Goldwyn's first English picture had to be more than just good—deserves the warmest praise. Their use of the English sports field—and river—for screen thrills is brilliant in itself.

They have made a swift, exciting, amusing picture, with all their Hollywood polish and punch, which will, I am sure, rank with the best films of the year—not just with the best *British* films of the year.

The distinction is the measure of their success.

—Stephen Watts, *The Sunday Express*

I seem less enthusiastic than many about *A Yank at Oxford*. Robert Taylor is an industrious young man; he is one of the workers, one of the toilers in the vineyard. As the Yankee he who takes over Oxford, he may seem representative to the British of what we are really like, and the film may have a great success abroad on that account. The toiling Mr. Taylor is somewhat the victim of the idea of the sketch, and of its general handling, for he must play a brash American youth who finally shows up the Oxford snobs and becomes the hero of the day. Care has been taken in the presentation of the Oxford scene, the customs of the place, the problems of the undergraduates, deans, dons, chimes, and boat races, hazing and romance, and the result is neither very Oxford nor very Yankee; yet it's a cheerful thing which may amuse you.

—John Mosher, *The New Yorker*

The story is built for and around Mr. Taylor and he wins everything there is to win at Oxford. No British graduate has ever been able to do at Oxford what the handsome Bob does—or even at Cambridge, for that matter. But the Yanks will love it because it shows how much better they are than all the tradition in the world can make a Britisher.

When the story opened to introduce a raw, egotistical American youth being sent to Oxford, I thought for a foolish moment that the film would proceed to show how British tradition and British convention would mould him to a sense of modesty. But no. For this film is box-office, and every American will eat it up and ask for more. Whether British audiences will show the same appetite is doubtful. Such a lad as this particular "Yank" at Oxford would not be tolerated for a term.

Incidental thought: What would the Americans think if an Englishman went to Harvard, Yale or Cornell and behaved as this Yank did at Oxford? Would they think it very funny?

—Richard Haestier, *The Star*

Bluebeard's Eighth Wife

(Ernst Lubitsch—Paramount)

Claudette Colbert, Gary Cooper, Edward Everett Horton, David Niven.

What a capricious fatality pursues *Bluebeard's Eighth Wife*, which presents, just at this particular phase of history, Vienna as a place of honeymoon bliss and for comic effects harps upon the long, difficult spelling

of Czechoslovakia! If you want to sleep at nights, says Claudette Colbert, as the enticing heroine, to Gary Cooper, as the magnificent gallant, just spell Czechoslovakia backwards. Somehow one can't fancy the idea of Czechoslovakia as a soporific. The picture dates a bit in other ways, too, and seems in this epoch of wild and loony films somewhat in the style of more formal farce, with all that cautious, elaborate fixing of a comic situation. Miss Colbert and Mr. Cooper themselves are jaunty, look their best, and have their bright lines and their occasional spasms of high spirits, which include tussles and a spanking.

—John Mosher, *The New Yorker*

Ernst Lubitsch has slipped the boxing gloves over his brass knuckles again and is tapping out a few more Lubitsch touches in *Bluebeard's Eighth Wife*. Although it's not a bad comedy by our current depressed standards, it has the dickens of a time trying to pass off Gary Cooper as a multi-millionaire. Put seven divorced wives behind Mr. Deeds, each with a $50,000-a-year settlement, and it becomes pretty hard to believe that he's just a small boy at heart—which is the principal charm of Paramount's gangling hero. In these days it's bad enough to have to admire millionaires in any circumstances; but a millionaire with a harem complex simply can't help starting the bristles on the back of a sensitive neck.

But here is Mr. Cooper as the grinning tycoon with seven discarded matrimonial enterprises on his books and Claudette Colbert, the indigent marquis's daughter, as the lady who declines to become merely No. 8. There are a few captious sequences, enlivened by the supporting presence of Edward Everett Horton, Herman Bing, David Niven and Warren Hymer, but they do not entirely compensate for the arid and barren stretches which not even Lubitsch could make yield light comedy. It all ends in an asylum, with Bluebeard in a strait-jacket, which proves they're always getting the wrong man: the one they should have grabbed was the chap who picked Mr. Cooper for the part.

—Frank S. Nugent, *The New York Times*

The Adventures of Marco Polo

(Archie Mayo—United Artists)

Gary Cooper, Sigrid Gurie, Binnie Barnes, Basil Rathbone, H. B. Warner.

Marco Polo is a big Italian boy who sets out for China and the vast kingdoms of Kublaï Khan. He looks a lot like Gary Cooper but there is something strangely unimpassioned and preoccupied about him. He becomes involved in a great many adventures which somehow never seem quite dangerous enough. He is photographed against expansive panoramas that are about as impressive as a footstool when the camera finally closes in on them. To be specific, *Marco Polo* is a cold, unglamorous show, and Producer Goldwyn, Actor Cooper, and Director Mayo are great disappointments to me. I don't know what's the matter with me, but I like my great big pictures great big.

—Katharine Best, *Stage*

The Front Page

(Lewis Milestone—United Artists)

Adolphe Menjou, Pat O'Brien, Mary Brian, Edward Everett Horton.

It is hard to believe that Lewis Milestone, director of *All Quiet on the Western Front* and *The Front Page*, should recently have been responsible for *Paris in Spring* and *Anything Goes*, two mediocre little musicals which anyone of average ability could have made; who would think, while watching them, that their director was a man of whose ability Miss Lejeune wrote, nearly eight years ago now,

"Spell Czechoslovakia backwards . . ."

"It seems to me that here is a talent which may very well develop into the first cinema genius of America's next decade."

Milestone's failure to live up to his earlier promise seems symbolical of Hollywood's recent progress; pictures have become slicker, more polished, more adroit, but they have lost their punch. Purity campaigning in America has no doubt got much to do with it. *The Front Page* would be condemned by the Hays organisation of to-day; *All Quiet*, on the other hand, would be banned in half a dozen countries in Europe. *The Front Page* was coarse, callous, and utterly unmoral. From its opening shot of a hangman lackadaisically testing out his gallows to its brilliantly cynical curtain, it contained only three characters who were not completely soulless, and of these three one was a prostitute and another a murderer; it was the first of a series of pictures which taught us that the American newspaperman is the lowest form of animal life, several grades below the Australian aborigine.

Yet for all this it was a grand piece of work, magnificent in its force, characterisation and construction. "Milestone's cutting in *The Front Page*," wrote Paul Rotha in *Celluloid*, "is as good as anything that has been done in the Russian cinema", and it will be long before we can forget those telephones and that roll-top desk, and that company of reporters, waiting to cover the hanging in their dingy room above the deathhouse. America's deplorable social evils—gangsters, graft and a yellow press—have yet at least one virtue; they have given to its film-makers some magnificent material.

—H. E. Blyth, *World Film News*

The Drum

(Zoltan Korda—London Films)

Sabu, Raymond Massey, Valerie Hobson, Roger Livesey, Desmond Tester.

The setting is the North-West Frontier, and there is scarcely a single scene which is not wildly picturesque. The mountain landscapes are magnificent, the architecture is fabulous, the Oriental characters are uniformly superhuman, and even the English, in spite of the necessary comic relief that they must occasionally provide, can be relied upon to play up to the setting and to parade or fight with entirely appropriate gestures.

The effect depends, of course, almost entirely on the photography, and on the direction of Mr. Zoltan Korda. It is difficult for the casual spectator to understand what it is that makes such an episode as the fight in which the film culminates so exciting, but perhaps the success of the film as a whole really depends on a quite simple though uncommon quality—its consistency. The single aim is directly pursued, the resources of the cinema are concentrated, and the effect of what is really no more than reasonable discretion is at moments overwhelming.

—*The Times*

The Drum probably breathes the authentic British military spirit better than anything yet seen on the screen. A. E. W. Mason's story, set on the North-West Frontier, tells of a treacherous tribe leader, a fugitive Indian boy prince, and the rescue of a Resident's small garrison after fierce fighting.

Strong point of the picture is the spectacular side, in glowing Technicolour that is never garish. The marches through majestic mountain country to the bagpipes; the Eastern crowds in the outpost town, and the battles are vividly handled on a large scale. Although the climax rather loiters, and the humour is confined to a few gleams, the note of gentlemanly gallantry lends dignity to the most exciting moments.

—P. L. Mannock, *The Daily Herald*

Jezebel

(William Wyler—Warner Bros.)
Bette Davis, Henry Fonda, George Brent, Margaret Lindsay.

Jezebel is an example of the latest sort of movie, that which tries to present a genuine picture of a complex individual character. Almost any sort of authenticity survives more easily on the screen than this : whether it derive from historical accuracy, observation of modern social conditions, or merely from the straightforward exploitation of dynamic and desirable persons. Perhaps a medium which depends on movement and has to keep moving is more naturally suited to the panorama than the portrait. In the close dissection of character there may be something incurably static, depending on silence, intimacy, leisurely tempo. And then a film like *Jezebel* comes along to suggest the possibility of revealing character as effectively as in a good novel or play. Much of the credit is due to Miss Bette Davis, who is a real actress; her impersonation of Miss Julie, a spoiled, wealthy, imperious *belle* in the New Orleans of 1852, is so positive and alive that her first appearance has all the excitement of a stage entry. As the film unrolls her character grows, gradually and inevitably; her cruelty, her pride, her egotism, her genuine love for Preston (Mr. Henry Fonda), her inability to give in to him even when she really wants to, her desperate inner loneliness and emptiness. Though she makes no concessions to sentimentality, anything that happens to this girl is our concern. The script and William Wyler's direction see to it that what does happen is in keeping. His re-creation of the old French town with its periodic scourges of yellow fever, and of the negro plantation, Halcyon Farm, with its soft southern evenings and its singing—all this is excellently done; but it is a sort of excellence which Clarence Brown and other directors have taught us to expect. It is rarer to find the various threads of the drama—North *v.* South, the aristocratic contempt for business, the ethics of the duelling ground—so skilfully handled and so constantly shot with beauty. *Jezebel* is a decorative film; but its most decorative moments reinforce the drama. The ball at which Julie insults New Orleans conventions by appearing in a red, instead of a white, dress is a charming spectacle in itself, and its easy charm heightens the effect of Julie's brazen daring. There is a moment when she flutters impulsively downstairs while the butler's taper, lighting the chandelier, moves gravely across the screen in the opposite direction: a pattern too significant to be unintentional. *Jezebel* is an imperfect film; Mr. Fonda cannot put much life into the hero, and Julie's final gesture of self-scarifice is as novelettish as such Hollywood atonements are apt to be; but elsewhere one welcomes the attempts to break away from the usual slickness and sentimentality.

—Peter Galway,
The New Statesman and Nation

Mad About Music

(Norman Taurog—Universal)
Deanna Durbin, Herbert Marshall, Gail Patrick, Arthur Treacher.

Just a year ago Deanna Durbin—now 15—arrived, administering a dumbfounding shock of admiration. In her third picture this delightfully natural young person is, if possible, better than ever. Her flute-like voice is heard in Gounod's "Ave Maria"—and in three comparatively lamentable popular concoctions; and her gaiety is a great asset to a story rather below her previous couple in quality, though still good. It is, in fact, on a lower mental level, being about a schoolgirl in Switzerland with an imaginary explorer father. She grabs Herbert Marshall and makes him play the parent. Embarrassments are good, though foreseen. Gail Patrick plays a film-star mother, with ballyhoo scenes and some chokey sentimentality. A bemused synthetic yarn, but the Durbin child is unique. There is none like her, none; and the velvety Marshall voice and manner are at their best.

—P. L. Mannock, *The Daily Herald*

Two things I cannot have too much of—Disney cartoons and Deanna Durbin films. But I foresee trouble for Deanna and her sponsors. The delightful 15-year-old child with the dancing eyes and smile of an angel has been put on a pedestal of heavenly innocence in her first two films. How to get down to mundane characterisations is the problem. In *Mad About Music* her wings are moulting. She is telling lies like a trouper. The metaphor may be twisted, but the spelling is right, for this film, more than the other two, reveals that she is really a great little actress.

Not so spirited as 100 *Men and a Girl*, the new film is built on quieter, more solid lines, presumably to show how well Deanna can act. It may not be considered quite as good as its predecessor, but the difference hardly matters.

—A. Jympson Harman, *The Evening News*

Critical Summary.

Deanna Durbin, it seems, has survived the considerable handicap of having made of her first picture a sensational success. In the film world many have started at the bottom and climbed to the top of the tree, and not a few have reversed the process, by starting at the top and gradually working their way down. This was the fate which was confidently predicted for Deanna Durbin, firstly after "Three Smart Girls" and then after "100 Men and a Girl", but it has not yet overtaken her. "Mad About Music" is not quite so good as the other two, but it is amply good enough. Her producers, however, must be greatly concerned about her future. Spontaneity and freshness, so rare in the cinema, are quickly lost in the commercial atmosphere, and in about a year she will be old enough for romance. We would almost rather that she retired now to the Metropolitan, before Hollywood had a chance to spoil her.

Bank Holiday

(Carol Reed—Gainsborough)
Margaret Lockwood, Hugh Williams, John Lodge, Rene Ray.

Without any preliminary trumpets, blah-blah, or other advance noises, a grand British picture has slipped into town. It is *Bank Holiday*, a tragi-comedy about people like us. Most of the action takes place in a South of England seaside town during a Bank Holiday week-end. Twelve people, most of them strangers to one another, are thrust by chance into the dramatic saucepan and well and truly stirred. The result is a dish that should be to everybody's taste, for it contains all the most popular flavours. The story is slight, but it is not the story that matters. The dozen characters—each so skilfully portrayed—are what gives this picture its quality. Looking over the credit titles, I fail to see the name of Betty White, the young woman who cast the film. She deserves as much credit as anyone else responsible for the excellence of *Bank Holiday*, a film that everyone in these islands should see.

—Moore Raymond, *The Sunday Dispatch*

The film has been made by one of our younger British directors, Carol Reed, who is beginning to do most things well, because he has learnt from the start to do them simply. *Bank Holiday* is an improbable story which has been given, through the truth of its detail, an air of almost indisputable authenticity. The whole film reeks of August Bank Holiday at one of our less exclusive beach resorts; the tired children, the crowded side shows, the grim rows of boarding houses, the sea washing up almost apologetically against the boots of Bexborough's massed sleepers. The early London scenes, too, are sensitively done, and the actors, on the whole, give us the sort of people we know and can believe in. I liked especially Margaret Lockwood as the girl, John Lodge as the husband, and the whole of Wally Patch's Cockney family; but best of all I liked Wilfrid Lawson's three-minute sketch of a Sussex County police-sergeant, slow, unruffled, faintly cynical, and timeless as the quiet world around him.

—C. A. Lejeune, *The Sunday Observer*

Critical Summary

When at Christmas two years ago a small and unimportant little English picture called "Midshipman Easy" appeared unobtrusively in the West End there were points about it which made one glance at the programme to find out the name of its director; and since then Carol Reed has never looked back. "Midshipman Easy" was followed by "Laburnum Grove", an excellent comedy with Edmund Gwenn and Cedric Hardwicke, and then came "Talk of the Devil," a thriller which received many very favourable notices for its ingenuity and originality. And now "Bank Holiday" has eclipsed them all, being singled out by several critics as the best picture of a week which produced no less than fourteen releases, including two of Hollywood's most lavish and costly productions. Carol Reed, it seems, has arrived.

Bringing up Baby

(Howard Hawks—RKO Radio)
Katharine Hepburn, Cary Grant, Charlie Ruggles.

Blonde, vacant-eyed Miss Lombard has a rival. The intense Miss Hepburn of the "rocking-horse nostrils", the quivering mouth and the pent-up energy dithers through a picture called *Bringing Up Baby*, and proves that she can beat most of the screen's comediennes at their own game. In *Sylvia Scarlett* Miss Hepburn showed that she could enter into the spirit of knockabout; in *Stage Door* she slyly revealed an ability to put over bright lines with a poker face. *Bringing Up*

Baby gives her the freedom of farce, and she revels in it, tossing dignity to the winds in sequences which require her to slide over cliffs and plunge into rivers, swing on ladders, and parade—the back of her gown having been torn off—in her scanties.

It was an unexpected pleasure to find this such an amusing film. These crazily bright modern comedies have been wearing thin lately. *Bringing Up Baby*, an exercise on the girl-chases-man theme, has enough new ideas to make one feel that there is plenty of life in the old plot yet.

—Ian Coster, *The Evening Standard*

This is a farce which you can barely hear above the precisely enunciated patter of Miss Katharine Hepburn and the ominous tread of deliberate gags. In *Bringing Up Baby* Miss Hepburn has a role which calls for her to be breathless, senseless and terribly, terribly fatiguing. She succeeds, and we can be callous enough to hint it is not entirely a matter of performance.

After the first five minutes of this new show—we needed those five to orient ourselves—we were content to play the game called "the cliché expert goes to the movies" and we are not at all proud to report that we scored 100 per cent against Dudley Nichols, Hagar Wilde and Howard Hawks, who wrote and produced the quiz. Of course, if you've never been to the movies, *Bringing Up Baby* will be all new to you—a zany-ridden product of the goofy farce school. But who hasn't been to the movies?

—Frank S. Nugent, *The New York Times*

Critical Summary

As will be seen from above, the critics were by no means in agreement over Katharine Hepburn's ability to play in crazy comedy, partly, no doubt, because there are many who feel that crazy comedy has had its day and partly because Miss Hepburn has always been a subject of controversy. There are those who feel that she has never fulfilled the promise shown in "Morning Glory", though personally we are inclined to think that she was seen at her best in the name part of "Alice Adams", which stands, with "Ah, Wilderness", as one of the best small town pictures that Hollywood has ever made. Miss Hepburn, in her time, has unwisely antagonised more than one critic, with the result that when, as in this case, she attempts an innovation, she can hardly hope that it will be received with easy tolerance and forbearance if it is not altogether successful.

Le Roi S'amuse

(Pierre Colombier—French)

Victor Francen, Raimu, Gaby Morlay, Elvire Popesco.

Seldom has there been a saucier, more truly French essay in the risky than *Le Roi S'amuse*. As a piece of satire it is brilliant in every way. Its shafts of wit, its open mockery of humanity's foibles and follies are priceless. It attacks not only royalty but democracy, not only political jobbery but snobbery. It should be compulsory for every Member of Parliament to see it not once but twice.

A thoroughly enjoyable film, this, but only for grown-ups or for those who refuse to grow older than forty-five. Its burlesque is never unkind or savage, but as entertaining in its ridicule as it is possible to be. It has rapid action and joyous skill in character-drawing, and its flirtatious foreign monarch, although not too satisfactorily played by Victor Francen, makes a diverting tour amongst the ladies of France.

Never have I seen a more comical face upon the screen than that drawn by the superlative comedian Raimu when he finds that the King has done him the honour of conferring upon him the order of *Le Cocu Magnifique*. His expressive horror at his discovery is a triumph of the comic art.

—Sydney W. Carroll, *The Sunday Times*

La Tendre Ennemie

La Tendre Ennemie

(Max Ophüls—French)

Simone Berriau, George Vitray, Marc Valbel.

This is a mordant little satire about three ghosts who attend a betrothal party to save a young girl from contracting an unhappy marriage. There is something of *Topper* about it, but with more nostalgia for life, a less robust enjoyment of the antic for the antic's sake. The ghosts still cling to the shreds of their earthly superstitions. They will not light three cigarettes from one match. They shudder at talk of their own death. They are not joyous comrades by any means, but they have wit and gallantry of a sort, and sometimes a rather wistful pathos.

La Tendre Ennemie is not one of France's greater pictures, but it is neat and individual, contriving a good deal of polite pleasure for one ingenious hour.

—C. A. Lejeune, *The Sunday Observer*

Nina Petrovna

(V. Tourjansky—French)

Isa Miranda, Fernand Gravet, Aimé Clariond.

Nina Petrovna is a mourning card for a great city. It is a tale of that old Vienna for which many a Viennese must be sighing now.

It concerns gay young officers and waltzing maidens, duels and dawn and masquerades at midnight, and it is played against a background of gilded salons and garden cafés with tables under the trees. The characters are people whom we have met many times before. We find their acquaintance well worth renewing when their story is told as charmingly as it is here. The film gives us our first glimpse of Isa Miranda, whom we shall shortly be seeing in pictures from Hollywood. She is beautiful, acts with an easy grace, and reminded me of Marlene Dietrich and Lili Damita.

There is a lovely faded glamour about this picture. It is like a tinkling tune played on an old music-box, and its notes seem even sadder when one comes out of the theatre and looks at the posters in the hands of the newspaper boys.

—Richard Haestier, *The Star*

Generals Without Buttons

(Jacques Daroy—French)

Jean Murat, Claude May, Saturnin Fabre.

They do these things well, the French, and *Generals Without Buttons* has all the virtues of simplicity, genial humour and a refreshing quietude. It is none of your frothy Gallic pieces, nor is it—except by psychoanalytic standards—the penetrating satire on war that the advance press-agentry might have had you believe. It is altogether too gentle for that, too close to the heart and mind of children to be bitter in its consideration of anything. War is a game and love is a game and losing one's trouser buttons to the enemy is a tragedy. *Generals Without Buttons* is as naïve as all that and a delight to a light-minded theatregoer.

The saga of the buttons, of the Longverne Mayor and the Velrans schoolmarm, of the famous peace conference in the village square has been charmingly, cleverly, deftly told. The youngsters have played it with the complete naturalness of children engrossed in a game of make-believe and the grown-ups, like Jean Murat, Claude May and Saturnin Fabre, with just sufficient exaggeration to lend a touch of adult humour. Jacques Daroy has directed it sensitively, with shrewd respect for the iron-clad, adult-posted world children live in, and with a camera-wise relish of the pastoral. War is not supposed to be idyllic and generals should not be quaint, but *Generals Without Buttons* is both.

—Frank S. Nugent, *The New York Times*

COCKAL

Written by Rodn

Off-White and the Seven Dwarfs

The First Full-Strength Fairy Story Ever Told.

Once upon a time there was a Wicked Queen, called Queen Produsa, who lived in a big old Studio, with a moat and a whole lot of relations running round it.

Now this Wicked Queen had a beautiful step-daughter called Off-White, so named because she had become colourless through being kept locked up in the big gloomy studio with nothing to do.

Among the many trick effects to be found in the Wicked Queen's boudoir was a Magic Mirror. And to this Magic Mirror, she would say:—

"*Magic mirror on the wall,*
Hear my plea and do not stall.
I beg of you, financial geni,
Another loan, don't be a meanie."

To which the Magic Mirror would reply:—

"*Our answer is quite frankly 'Nurts,'*
We've lent you dough until it hurts.
With foreign stars you mess about
While pretty Off-White's doing nowt."

When the Wicked Queen heard this she went into one of her tempers and was in bed for some time with blood-pressure. She realised, however, that there was something in what the Magic Mirror had said.

So she called one of her Publicity Men and said to him: "Take Off-White into the West End and get her some publicity. Plenty of leg pictures, you know." And the Publicity Man hurried away to do her bidding.

So the Publicity Man took Off-White into the heart of the West End to publicise her, but when he gazed upon her, his heart was touched.

"No, no," he said. "I cannot do this foul deed to one so fair."

"Hell," said Off-White, "have I gone blonde for nothing?"

Without answering, the Publicity Man fled into the forest and all the animals ran away from him like mad except the skunks who recognised a friend.

For some time, Off-White wandered aimlessly through the forest until she happened upon the home of The Seven Dwarfs.

They introduced themselves as Greasy, Soapy, Oily, Lousy, Lazy, Spotty and Frankly Indecent. They were, they told Off-White sheepishly, theatrical producers.

Well, Off-White was quite happy with the Seven Dwarfs. She appeared in several of their productions with some success and generally put their house in order.

Now when the Wicked Queen heard of this, through a very suggestive picture on page 4 of her Magic Mirror, she was consumed with jealousy. So she went down to an underground dungeon known as the Contracts Department, and concocted one of her favourite contracts—The Seven Year Contract, or Sleeping Death, from which the victim can only be saved by an earthquake or a blessed event.

It was the work of a minute for the Queen to make herself hideous; then, with the Seven Year Contract, or Sleeping Death, tucked in her pants pocket, she took a taxi up West to the Home of the Seven Dwarfs.

As it happened, the Dwarfs were out playing a mixed eightsome with a friend of theirs called Joe, so the Wicked Queen found Off-White alone.

"Good-morning, my dear," she croaked, "I am an old witch."

"You're telling me," replied Off-White.

The Queen smiled under her false moustache.

"How would you like this lovely rosy contract?" she wheedled. "I've got a million of them."

"Oh goody, goody," said Off-White and she quickly seized the contract and signed it. The next moment she had fallen into the Sleeping Death.

For seven long years Off-White remained inert and motionless in the Sleeping Death, while the Seven Dwarfs and the shy, soft-footed animals we call audiences mourned for her in vain. Then, one day, a handsome talent-scout chanced to pass by and saw Off-White, still beautiful in spite of her outer covering of cobwebs. He leapt out of his roadster and stooping over the still form of Off-White, he rattled a few American dollars in her ear.

Off-White came back to life and left for Hollywood immediately. Her last letter says that she's doing very nicely and hopes to be teamed with Leopold Stokowski in a new musical called "Oh, Mr. Conductor!"

To this day the Wicked Queen may be seen hobbling around her tumbledown castle, gibbering crazily to herself and to the newspapers about a new programme of pictures soon to be started upon.

The Seven Dwarfs now run a hotel at Brighton and get in the way rather.

Pretty Grimm, eh?

(*Note: all the characters in this story are purely fictional and wholly repulsive.*)

PASS GRANNY

THE HOT TRUMPET

PLEASE

An 18 piece swing band composed of grandmothers between the ages of 45 and 78 will head the list of attractions on Gabriel Heatter's "We, the People" Program . . . over the WABC—Columbia network.

The grandmothers' swing band was organised about a year ago in the Bronx, under the auspices of the WPA Federal Music Project . . . it is composed of women who never before had an opportunity for recreational hobbies. . . . They are practising every night until midnight.

—From a Columbia Broadcasting System publicity sheet

Cue for Song: "Granny's Got Swing":—

Verse.

Little old cottage
With a little old harmonium,
And a little old lady so old and frail,
But there's brand new music
On the little old harmonium
When that little old lady starts raggin' the scale.

Refrain.

Granny's started swinging on her old harmonium
Granny's got rhythm and Granny's got zing.
Hear her do St. Louis Blues it's pandemonium—
Swing's got Granny
And Granny's got swing!
Granny's had a visit from that Old Swing Debbil,
The Rhythm Bug has got her with its well-known sting,
Murder on the bass notes and trouble in the treble—
Swing's got Granny
And Granny's got Swing!
There's lavender and lace
All over the place,
And her back hair's coming down.
When Mother Machree
Drops in for tea
Those little old ladies go to town!
Granny's latest rocking-chair is made of chromium,
Hear her girlish laughter make the rafters ring,
Granny's started swinging on her old harmonium—
Swing's got Granny,
It's quite uncanny,
Swing's got Granny
And Granny's got Swing!
Yowzir!

LORUM

Rodney Hobson

Dinner at Hate

An "anti-divorce" diet, designed to prevent quarrels between husbands and wives, is being tried by Hollywood film stars.

The principle is simple. It is for both husband and wife to avoid the foods that make them irritable.

—News item

(Scene: the Byzantine dining-hall of a Spanish villa in Beverly Hills. Dinner is served.)

"Say, sweetheart, what's this little culinary catastrophe you've rustled up for a hungry husband?"

"Why, sugar, it's our new anti-divorce diet. If we can only eat the things that don't irritate us, there's no reason why we shouldn't stay happily married for at least a couple of years."

"But, listen, toots, if that's your idea of a non-irritant, I'll take vanilla."

"Now, honey, that's not like you. Here am I working my fingers to the bone for you, and all I get is a lot of dirty cracks."

"And what do I get? Ptomaine, more than likely."

"Wise guy, eh? You'll eat it and like it."

"That's what you think. What is it—some sort of ham?"

"That's right, sweetheart. I was thinking of your acting when I ordered it."

"Smart, eh? Say, listen, if I were a producer I'd cast you for the title role in *Dead End*. That's what I'd do. Anyway, I ain't hungry."

"Maybe you swallowed your pride. That'd give you that feeling of fulness."

"Aw, go jump in the lake—I'm having the water changed to-morrow anyhow."

"All right, Typhoid, if that's the way you feel about it." (She beckons to the butler.)

"Hey, Al, you was in Mack Sennett comedies once, wasn't you?"

"Dat's right, leddy."

"You've slung a custard-pie in your time, eh?"

"Have I slung a pie? Listen, beautiful, I could hit a running cop in the kisser at fifty yards."

"Swell. Howdya like to grab a hold on this omelette and plaster it evenly over old sourpuss there?"

"De boss, baby?"

"How quaintly you phrase things! I mean my husband. Swing it, brother."

Wham!

"Nice shooting, kid. Now pass me the phone, will you. I've some reservations to make in Reno . . ."

(*At that moment she is drenched by a fire-hose. For this is Hollywood and it is Spring.*)

LAMENT FOR A LANKY LOVELY

A 6-ft. blonde beauty of Broadway can't get escorts. She is popular on the stage, but when men see her seventy-two inches of loveliness bearing down on them they quit.

"American men are such total 'sillies'," she says. "If they can't tower over a girl and impress her with a feeling of guardianship they decline to be her companion."

—News Item

The average Yankee
Doesn't like his ladies to be lanky.
He cannot feel that he's a guardian
When the girl-friend has to fold up like an accordion.
In order to hear
What he's trying to whisper in her ear.
Yes, American men are such total "sillies"
That it gives them the willies
To have to stand on a chair
In order to share
What they hope is going to be a witticism,
Only to hear a pretty sharp criticism
Of the stature
Allotted them by Nature.
Life in America is full of sport
For the girl who's short,
But for the long and the lissom,
It obviously issom.

Hurt Felines Department

It was alleged in an article in *The Animals' Friend* that cruel methods were used to keep 200 cats on the set for a scene in *The Goldwyn Follies*. They were supposed to have been blown on with air-hoses.

This allegation was vigorously denied by Mr. Goldwyn, but it has provided this department with an idea. Why not supply all studios with air-hoses to blow certain highly-paid cats *off* the set. That Miss X, for instance; and that handsome Mr. A—a well-directed air-hose would do him all the good in the world, even if it only blew his toupee over his eyes.

And there are one or two of the little Wardour Street alley-cats we might hose off the set, eh, Mrs. Rackstraw? You know as well as I do who I mean, you big tease, so don't pretend you don't.

Always in the forefront of progress and well to the back at trade shows, *World Film News* have now endowed a mobile air-hose unit for the use of British Studios. This can be put to many uses such as turning over the pages of sticky scripts; as a means of artificial respiration for semi-conscious leading ladies; or it can be pressed into service to represent the passionate breathing of juvenile leads who have never been seen to breathe at all.

"Can't keep open with only three in the one and sixpennies."

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BY ROBERT HUMFREY

This book will be welcomed by all who are seeking careers in the film world or have recently entered the film industry, for its excellent advice on taking the important first steps. It shows how, on the dramatic side, film directors are always watchful for real talent and ready to nurse it and give it the chance it deserves. It outlines the many intensely interesting and proportionately well paid technical and skilled crafts and occupations within a film unit.

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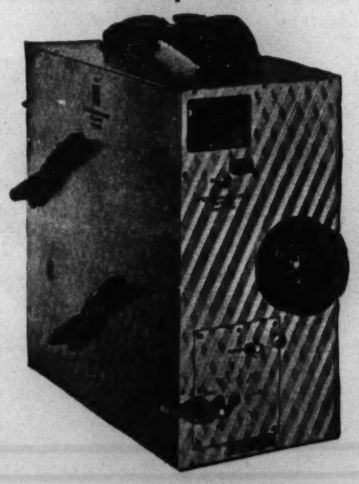

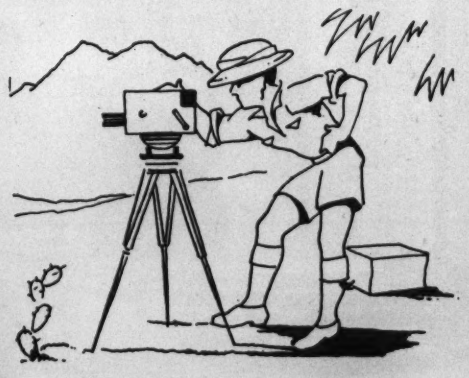

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GROWN-UPS often PREFER the CHILDREN'S HOUR

Some listeners' opinions discussed by GEORGE AUDIT

IF Sir Stephen Tallents cannot send more producers outside the B.B.C., he can at least bring the opinions of ordinary people back to the B.B.C. This he is trying to do consistently and methodically through the Listener Research Department.

It is only about a year since the B.B.C. came to the belated but sensible conclusion that they must find some reliable substitute for the box-office verdict on the popularity of any particular item. Until then they had worked partly by group guesswork, the group being the dozen or so people who are in charge of programme planning at Broadcasting House, and partly in line with the suggestions and criticisms seeping through from their Correspondence Department. But this method had certain blind spots. For it was assumed that programmes were popular so long as no excessive complaints rolled in. But it did not occur to them that a man will only complain when he is dissatisfied, *and has no alternative course.*

It is simple enough when considered in practice. The religious and subdued tone of Sunday programmes were and are distasteful to millions. But instead of writing shoals of letters, listeners, as subsequent research has shown, simply switched over to Radio Normandy or Luxembourg. To take another example, unnecessary time and money were lavished on productions after ten o'clock on weekday evenings and no great volume of written complaints arrived to indicate dissatisfaction. A false assumption was made that such items were generally well received. Actually they were not being received at all as a recent questionnaire has shown that "a mass switching-off of radio sets takes place between 10.0 and 10.30 p.m. on weekdays."

So Listener Research began to distribute questionnaires, set up critical listening panels, and collect information.

When criticisms of radio plays and features were collected it was found that many broadcasts are difficult to follow. It is often hard to distinguish between one character and another and a large cast causes confusion. Listeners want more comedy and are pleased with Classical plays and Victorian melodrama. There was an outcry against background music in plays and features.

This complaint against incidental music still mystifies many producers. But it has been so insistent that one must accept it as a fact and try to find some explanation. In a stage performance the attention is held by the appearance and movement of the characters and if your neighbour asks you for a match, which causes you to miss some of the words, you are not cut off from the performance. In a radio performance you not only lose the appearance, but your distractions are multiplied a thousandfold. While you are listening to a play you may be munching your supper or the baby may start crying. Unless the words are simple and very clear you can easily lose the thread of the story. And then background music only gets in the way.

The Listener Research idea has spread to publications and the *Radio Times* has just called in 8,182 letters of criticism. Many of them show uncommon sense especially when dealing with the manner of radio productions. Witness:—

1ST LISTENER. Mr. Middleton talks, and the others read—and usually read very badly. There is no point in bringing a famous man to the microphone to read his paper. It would be better to give the job to an announcer.

B.B.C. But where can you find speakers like Mr. Middleton? And working people are no better than the famous, witness *In Town To-night.*

2ND LISTENER. The dullness of In Town To-night could be avoided by choosing people who do or have done things that are by nature interesting.

3RD LISTENER. One would suppose (from the caricatures you put over on the air) that the working class Londoner is an utter nitwit, unable to appreciate anything but beer and tobacco and entirely unable to enunciate a single sentence except in an idiotic and degraded tone of voice.

4TH LISTENER. Why must all plays portraying characters of girls in business make them appear so illiterate and ungrammatical—or alternatively so ultra-refeened?

B.B.C. There are other points of view. Such as—

5TH LISTENER. I do not like to hear the too frequent use of the word 'blimey'. I believe it to be a shortening of the low-down vulgarism used by gutter-merchants.

6TH LISTENER. I blame the B.B.C. because they evince a growing pre-occupation with 'the man in the street' whose empty head and expressionless face already loom too large on our horizon.

Now hear what they have to say about microphone technique:—

7TH LISTENER. Those who seem to me best at producing a friendly atmosphere are those who seem to be enjoying themselves, i.e., A. J. Alan telling a story as if he had just dropped in for a smoke and a yarn.

8TH LISTENER. And anything that destroys one's illusion as to the spontaneous performance should be cut out.

AUDIT. They want to hear their own language—

9TH LISTENER. Let there be announcers who will convey in their speech something of the native culture of the Regions.

AUDIT. What they think of jazz—

10TH LISTENER. And as to jazz—it gives the average manual labourer the pip!

AUDIT. A confession!—

11TH LISTENER. I usually go to church but I leave my mind behind me at the fireside.

AUDIT. Another, from a young girl—

12TH LISTENER. Sundays have their trials: clean clothes, religious duties, father's rest, visitors and best manners, but all would be forgotten if we could have a Children's Hour on Sunday.

AUDIT. Grown-ups often prefer the Children's Hour—

13TH LISTENER. The Children's Hour plays are good, and it would be very nice to hear some of them later in the evenings.

AUDIT. And they dón't like crooners—

14TH LISTENER. Here is a verse, taken fresh from the mouth of a crooner:

Lick a cow aline a let
OOO ten how a Rine a low.
Say high cow adown a let
Ah! How a cow has so.

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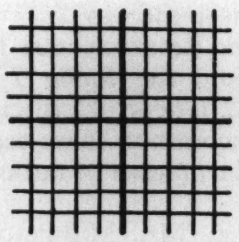

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SCIENTIFIC AND OTHER SPECIALIZED
SUBJECTS EXECUTED IN COLLABORATION
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MOVIES IN MUSWELL HILL

"Muswell Hill," said one cinema manager, "divides its leisure between the Church, the Cinema and the Green Man." Overlooking the great expanse of North London, elevated physically by its position, culturally by its snobbery, Muswell Hill was once a stronghold of middle-class respectability. Lately it has lost much of its exclusiveness. Flats have increased the population at the expense of the exclusiveness. It is still predominantly "better middle-class," and nowhere is this more reflected than in its cinemas.

Until three years ago Muswell Hill was poorly equipped. Two new supers put an end to the mediocre entertainment of their old-fashioned predecessors, and made the cinema much more a part of the life of every day. Each of the two large houses attracts a slightly different type of patron; there are few regulars in either case and all show considerable care in their choice of film. A picture which does not gain the approval of Monday night's audience might as well be written up as a failure right away.

At the cheaper cinema the greatest attractions are spectacle and action, rather than atmosphere and sentiment. The pace must be fairly fast, either swift and dramatic, or slick and funny—something refreshing after the humdrum of suburban life. *Educated Evans* was a great success here. Ginger Rogers and Fred Astaire were popular for a time, but enthusiasm waned as the novelty wore off. Perhaps their films were not "meaty" enough for these filmgoers—they certainly like something to exercise their mental molars on. Newsreels, in moderation, get by with credit, and the *March of Time* is considered by the manager to have a definite box-office value, though he says that to show more than one 20 minutes' documentary in a programme would be bad policy. Similarly any form of moralising meets with a chilly reception.

At the dearer house, tastes are a little different. Here we have the Mecca of the aged, who form a fair proportion of the inhabitants of Muswell Hill. A telling commentary on the nature of the audience is the enormous demand for the deaf-aids which are installed. It has even been known for an old lady to request a cushion for her sciatica and accommodation for her pekingese! Retired gentlefolk, a considerable element in the neighbourhood, make the cinema a genteel form of recreation, and choose their films with care, boycotting anything with a doubtful title. They have no use for anything far-fetched or exotic. They like a good, sensible plot of medium pace. They like films about ordinary people like themselves, or historically familiar characters—Britishers like Clive and Rhodes, whose motives they can understand and admire. A tale with a true British flavour, though not necessarily of British production, goes down as well as anything.

(*Continued at foot of next column*)

The most astonishing success was *Victoria the Great*. It attracted not only keen filmgoers, but many for whom its appeal was a personal or patriotic one. And a vast number had never, judging by their disconcerted manner, been inside a cinema before; but they remembered Victoria, and overcame their prejudices against "new-fangled amusements" in order to revive memories of times which had been their own. They hobbled forth, pushing each other in bathchairs, of which a considerable number were in evidence, and turning aside from the very brink of the grave to take a last look at the Grand Old Lady. Never had the cinema seen so large an audience, and certainly never had so great a proportion been over eighty years of age.

Daphne Hudson

BOOK REVIEWS

D'Annunzio

By Tom D'Antongini (Heinemann, 15*s*.)

"I WAS at that time", writes Antongini in the course of a chapter on *D'Annunzio and the Cinema*, "the Editor of a fashion paper which had brought me a little money, and a good deal of trouble, and, as a compensation which I considered by no means despicable, the acquaintance of numerous 'mannequins' whom D'Annunzio, for once (a rare case in the course of our friendship) was forced to sample at second-hand". It will not only be readers of "Cockalorum" who will recognise this as a suitable prelude to a deal in film-making; nor will it be much of a surprise to learn that the famous D'Annunzio film *Cabiria* was shot before he had anything to do with it, and that his part in the cause was the supplying of sub-titles, the main title, and such modifications to the story which could be managed with the rushes already in existence. For this he was paid 50,000 lire (pre-war). He never saw the film. There is little more to be recorded of his relations with the film world, save that late in his life he saw a large number of films in private shows at his home, and thereafter delivered himself of the following remark—"I have been unable to take stock of the limits which this art of velocity has reached, but I know that it is only at the beginning of its career."

However, the chapter on cinema is only a small part of this hefty volume, in which Antongini, who knew D'Annunzio as intimately as any male could know him, and over a very long period of years (having been both his private secretary and his publisher), details, with a frankness only justified by his unshakable hero-worship, the behaviour and methods of life adopted by the poet.

Inevitably, much of the book is devoted to a study of fornication, which, apart from the writing of a not inconsiderable number of books, seems to have been the *chef d'œuvre* of this extraordinary man. I, for one, cannot find any more interest in the beast with two backs because it is domiciled among 500 damask cushions, erotic scents, and rose petals in a dwelling place tastelessly crammed with fin-de-siècle bijouterie. Sometimes it was Eleanora Duse, sometimes just a "stray cat" (charming description). By multiplication of examples there lies no great value; and perhaps Antongini would have done both his readers and the poet a service had he realised this. What was D'Annunzio anyway? He wrote some good novels, some good poetry, and was, in his early days at any rate, a really superb journalist. An individualist almost to a pathological degree, he lived a "naughty nineties" type of existence mingled with the now out-of-date extravagance of a Medici. He could fire people's enthusiasm, and he enjoyed the sport of war with an enthusiasm worthy of Mussolini Junior, that intrepid bomber of defenceless Abyssinians. And he bugled, in the Fiume episode, a fantastic and not ignoble gesture of patriotism. Had he been a man of administration and strategic ability (which the fizzle out at Fiume shows he was not) he might well have occupied the seat which is now Mussolini's, and he can certainly be said to have been one of the prime founders of Fascism.

All this Antongini's book emphasises with surprising fervour; for those who do not find D'Annunzio, for all his sensationalism, a "personnage peu interessant" it will make admirable reading. For others, it will at least raise the old, old argument—was this man worth his poetry—in the most acute and vicious form. Myself, I think he lived at least 300 years too late. Have we any use nowadays for someone whose favourite motto is "Me ne frego"—"I don't care."

B. W.

A Bibliography on the Cinema

Issued by Bristol Public Libraries

WE who review books periodically in these columns ought perhaps to have realised the amazingly large number of books on the cinema which have been published. We should probably have agreed that there are about 50 books on films, but the Bristol public libraries have just issued a bibliography on the cinema which has over 200 entries. It is a very thorough job of work including sections on Law, Censorship, Theatre Design, Writing for the Films, Photography, Projection, Sound, Colour and Documentary. Sections on the Cinema in Education, and Children and the Films should be particularly valuable to teachers, and the List of Periodicals should be in the hands of all Film Society secretaries. The booklet is available from James Ross, F.L.A., F.R.S.L., The City Librarian, Bristol.

Primarily it is designed with special reference to the availability of the books through the Bristol Libraries, but it stands as a remarkably complete bibliography on the cinema, and as such will be welcomed in a wider field. **T. B.**

BOOK REVIEWS

We Make the Movies

Edited by Nancy Naumburg (Faber & Faber. 10*s.* 6*d.*).

FAST on the heels of *Behind the Screen* comes the more solid performance of *We Make the Movies*. The idea is the same. Sixteen experts on film production analyse their respective jobs, and the whole process from script to screen is teased out bit by bit. The quality of this particular symposium may be judged by the names of the writers. It is an imposing list, containing names like Muni, Bette Davis, Walt Disney, Jesse Lasky and Sidney Howard, the writer. Judged strictly as an account of production processes, and as a compendium of information, no book could be better. All are first-rate workmen, and reflect their quality, and no one more than Robert E. Lee, who writes on the work of an Assistant Director. Few, perhaps, will want to know what an Assistant Director does in the world, but I get the impression that when all the shouting of producer, director, star, and "director of photography" is over, Robert E. Lee and his like do most of the work.

There is the nice earnestness about Paul Muni's contribution which one would expect of him. "Pictures must devote themselves to more than story or personality. They must present themes which will reach the audience. By recreating the lives and characters which have been potent social forces in their own time, perhaps the actor can reach people and influence them so that they will go forth with a new strength and a new vision for combating the evils of our own society."

Bette Davis has a shorter, but less articulated receipt for the role of the actress. "Hard work does it, health, and the determination to let nothing stop you."

By far the best essay in the book, however, is Sidney Howard's account of "How the story gets a treatment". If the book is, on the whole, a trifle too earnest and too informative, Mr. Howard blows the nonsense out of it with his first sentence. "The process by which the screen adaptor goes to work is, in itself, designed to cancel out inspiration." The rest is what one might expect from the fine dramatist who wrote "They Knew What They Wanted". Whatever Hollywood may do to its writers, it matures their humour.

Visualising Curriculum

By Charles F. Hoban, Snr. and Jnr. (The Garden Publishing Co. U.S.A.).

OTHER visual aids to learning are apt to be forgotten by those who preoccupy themselves with films.

The film might be a very superior instrument of observation but there are other school implements of great value. The novelty of the film tends to eclipse the value of other techniques. We are very grateful to the Hobans for putting the whole business in perspective.

Visualising Curriculum discusses the school journey, the museum visit, the use of lantern slides, film strips, maps and illustrated books. The others find film the instrument *par excellence* for organised observation of the real world. Visits and journeys can develop techniques of observation and the newspaper can be a filter to organise experience. The school visit suffers because the real experience tends to be fortuitous, it is an unorganised experience. The newspaper technique suffers because the process of editing and selecting which prepares the world for our inspection, may not give just the residue which the teacher needs. Documentary film, the authors find, gives a more balanced observation and dramatises the process which may remain dull and too particularised on a school visit. Film can show background and perspective to a process. It can gather examples scattered in space and time, and present them in a unity. *Visualising Curriculum* is itself an excellent example of an illustrated text-book. An imaginative make-up and profuse use of illustrated matter makes, what otherwise might have been just another text book, a readable and attractive example of modern school literature.

T.B.

Bombay Riots

By C. Denis Pegge (Honeyhill Press. 5*s.*).

THIS book is written in the form of a shooting script, but it does not claim to be the mere skeleton which the cameraman and cutter will later cover. It is, in itself, complete and satisfying. The author, seeking to convey the kaleidoscopic implications behind such an incident as the Ghandi riots in Bombay, the attitudes and problems of all sections of the community, the traditions and background of white men and Indians, has had forced on him this ingenious technique.

The "shots" are not merely indicated; their content and atmosphere is described with something of poetry. Once the tension, the suspense before a coming clash, has been established, the story moves on—shot by shot, exceedingly visual and never obtrusively literary—in such a manner that it is difficult to put it down before the end is reached. Film people will find it of technical interest. Others, less befogged with technicalities, will enjoy it for its qualities of sympathy and excitement, and for the very real picture of India and its problems which it so vividly paints.

My Wife's The Least of It

By William Gerhardi (Faber & Faber. 10*s.* 6*d.*).

MR. WILLIAM GERHARDI hits out at the Film Industry. His writing is unconventional and amusing. The film world gives him adequate scope and resources in a setting where the author's satirical humour can be seen at its best. The theme is a study of eccentricity and insanity (very much preferable to mediocrity) and this does much to make his characters seem even more human and alive than they might otherwise have been—for the novel is long and at times thin.

Mr. Baldridge, an author, past the prime of life, is still reaping a meagre existence from his one and only success "Dixie". Life, however, is flat and the future uncertain. At last, at the end of his tether, he is persuaded to turn "Dixie" into a scenario and sell to a film company. He spares no efforts to convince the "big men" that "Dixie" is on the right track. Life becomes hectic and complicated. "Dixie" is not sold and our hero's exuberant optimism is taken from his eyes. Next he pops down another hole of escapism in his marriage to an insane millionairess, and becomes a whole-hearted supporter of the Charity Racket, in which the author's ironical humour finds abundant targets.

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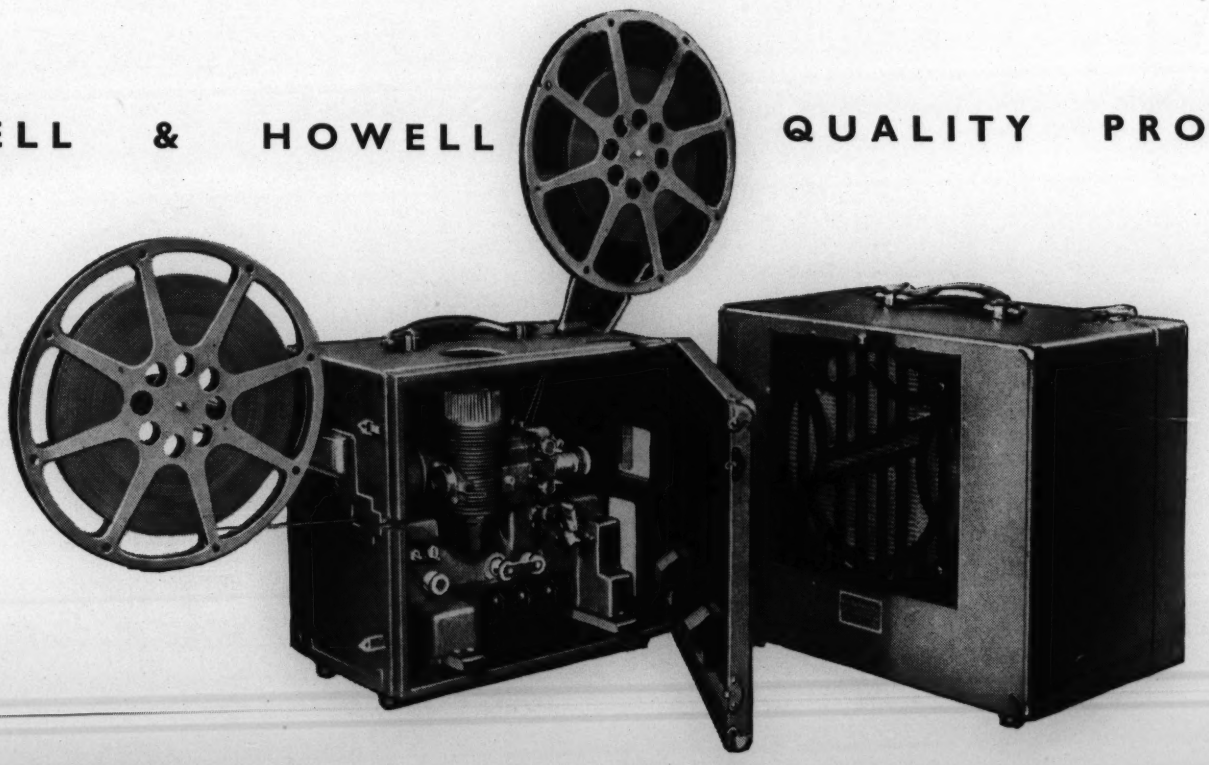

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007